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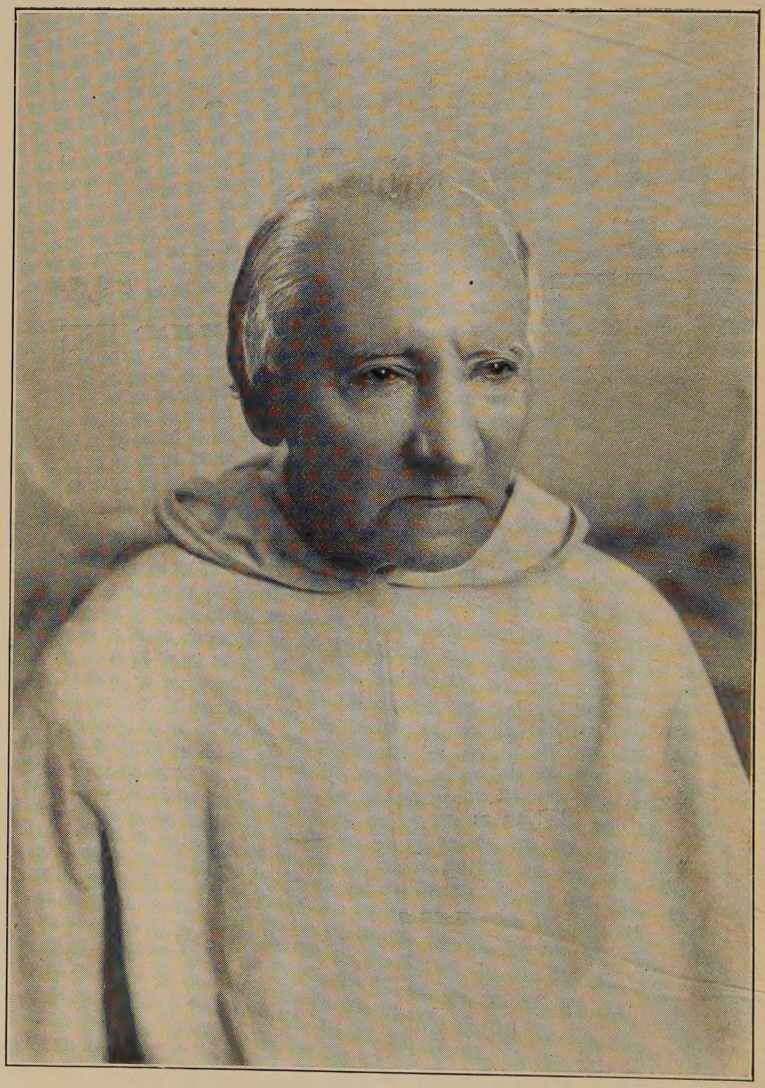

[*Phot. P. A. Matthews, Barbados.*

FR. REGINALD BUCKLER AT THE AGE OF SEVENTY-SEVEN.

FATHER REGINALD BUCKLER, O.P.

(1840—1927)

A Brief Memoir of his Life

by

C. M. ANTONY

(Author of *In St. Dominic's Country*, *St. Pius V.*, *St. Catherine of Siena, her Life and Times*, etc.)

Edited, with Foreword,

by

ROBERT BRACEY, O.P., F.R.Hist.S.

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FOREWORD

This little book gives us a slight but by no means an inadequate sketch of a very remarkable personality. Father Reginald Buckler had an individuality decidedly all his own. His old-world courtesy, his quaint bearing, his apt phrases and pithy sayings, the rare refinement of his scholarship, and the exceptional turn of his spirituality caused him gradually to achieve a sort of apotheosis. He became an absolute *institution* in the circle in which he moved, a semi-legendary character outside it. All sorts of stories came to be told about him, his words and expressions were quoted, his very gestures and tone of voice reproduced, while his mannerisms and energy of speech served to drive home and give currency to the Truths he lived only to teach. Sad pity had such a man found no fit biographer!

But Father Reginald has not suffered that misfortune. Inspired by enthusiastic gratitude, a gifted writer has in the following pages devoted her talent and her pen to the portrayal alike of the Teacher she reveres, and of the spiritual Treasures contained in his Letters and his books. And, most happily for her task, she possesses just those very qualifications which Carlyle has eulogised in the writer of the greatest biography known to our literature: A Heart and an Eye to discover Wisdom, and an Utterance to render it forth.

F. ROBERT BRACEY, O.P.

COMPILER'S NOTE

Since it is obvious that a clear and connected history of an Apostolate of seventy-two years cannot (however condensed) be compressed into the narrow limits of a book of this size—if it is to be readable : since, too, it is desired to give an accurate impression of Father Reginald Buckler's saintly personality rather than a meticulous representation of his manifold activities, the plan has here been adopted of allowing him to speak for himself—as far as possible in his own words—at the risk of omitting details for the most part unimportant.

C. M. ANTONY.

September 4th, 1927.

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Chapter I

THE BUCKLER FAMILY; AND EARLY YEARS

The romance of Divine Love which is the life-story of Father Reginald Buckler began when, on February 14th, 1840, their fifth and youngest son was born to John Chessell Buckler and Esther his wife, then living in the parish of Newington, Surrey.

The child could trace his descent on his father's side from an ancient and honourable family of Norman-French origin from the neighbourhood of Rouen, where the name is preserved in early ecclesiastical records, and where, in the Cathedral Necrology of the thirteenth century, we find mention of the first Father Reginald Buckler[1] :—

"29 Jan. Obiit Magister Reginaldus le Bouglier, Archidiaconus."

The first English Buckler whose name we know is the Anschetill Bouclar mentioned in the Winton Domesday Book (1185); but henceforth the name frequently recurs in the Patent Rolls and other State Papers in one of the various forms—le Bucler, le Bokeler, or Bukeler, into which the Norman le Bouclier (signifying a shield), was easily Anglicised. At the time of the Heralds' Visitations of 1565 and 1623 the elder branch of the family had long been established in

[1] All the genealogical notes in this chapter are derived from Mr. Charles Alban Buckler's valuable *Bucleriana*, now in the British Museum.

Dorset, being known as Buckler of Causeway and Wolcombe Maltravers[2], while a younger branch was firmly settled at Warminster, Wilts.[3]

The Bucklers were ecclesiastics,[4] soldiers, landed gentry, and Court officials.[5] Others were members of the learned professions, such as medicine; while one at least was a Gentleman Adventurer in Virginia in the reign of James I. The family shared in the general apostasy under Elizabeth, and its first recorded author was "that Godly and orthodox Divine, Mr. Edward Buckler," to whose use the parish of Wyke Regis (where his family held property) was sequestrated in 1640. He was one of Cromwell's chaplains, a distinction which obliged him to preach before his patron four

[2] Causeway was "a manor tything and farm" in the parish of Radipole.

[3] But the family was by no means confined to the southern counties. A certain Andreas Buckler was High Sheriff of Suffolk in 1415; William Buckler was Mayor of Carlisle in the reign of Henry VI; while a priest, Sir Richard Bokler, was instituted to the rectory of Quainton, Bucks, in 1447.

[4] In the east window of the church of Melbury Bubbe, Dorset, which was built and its windows filled with painted glass in the reign of Henry VI, may still be seen, carved upon scrolls in two small quarries, in tracery of Old English characters, these words:

Dn.s Walterus Bokeler
Rector isti loci.

Sir Walter, who was Prebendary of Salisbury, was instituted in 1466. He is but one of many "Bokeler" priests. He died in the fifth year of Henry VIII.

[5] Sir Walter Buckler of Causeway, who died in 1552, was Chamberlain to the Princess Elizabeth. During his lifetime their arms and crest were granted to the family. (*Arms*: Sable, on a fesse between three dragons' heads erased or, as many estoiles of eight points of the field. *Crest*: A dragon's head couped sable, collared with two gemels and gutté d'or. *Motto*: *FIDELIS USQUE AD MORTEM*).

times a year, for the consideration of £20. In 1655 he published a treatise with—had he but known it—the prophetical title: *God All in All.*

In the following centuries we find sailors, and merchants *en gros* inscribed in the family tree, which accounts for the connection of the Bucklers with the river-parishes of Rotherhithe and Bermondsey. But from the eighteenth century onwards they were chiefly distinguished as a literary, artistic, learned family. Dr. Benjamin Buckler (1716-1780), Fellow of All Souls, Oxford, was elected Keeper of the Archives of that college in 1777. He was a great authority, and published many works on genealogy and heraldry; and was one of the two Bucklers whose portraits were painted by Gainsborough.[6]

They were a vigorous, long-lived race—90 and even 96 are ages not uncommon in their pedigree—notable for their large families and remarkably unbroken descent. Through the centuries they allied themselves by marriage with most of the great county families of the south.

John Buckler of Bermondsey (1770-1851), grandfather of the "Buckler Trinity," was a distinguished artist and architect. His work was exhibited at the Royal Academy, of which he was an Associate, for over fifty years. As F.S.A. he illustrated numerous county histories; and like his son, John Chessell Buckler, he was famous for his collected architectural drawings of nearly every church in the south-west of

[6] The other was Dorothy Buckler, who married Sir John Lethbridge, of Sandhill Park, Taunton. Both she and Benjamin belonged to the younger branch.

England. In 1791 he married Ann Chessell of Brading. Eleven children were born to them, of whom the second, John Chessell, was to become the father of the three illustrious Dominicans.

John Chessell Buckler (1793-1894) was a remarkable man. Architect and artist like his father; F.S.A. and exhibitor at the Royal Academy, his love of beauty, particularly of line and form, modified and softened a character which naturally was stern almost to harshness. The sternness, however, was balanced by a strong sense of justice; a certain gift of quiet humour; and great common-sense. It was natural, as Father Reginald says, that he should have deeply felt what he considered the defection of his four sons; especially of the youngest, a mere child. But the sense of justice prevailed, together with his intense and tender parental affection. He had evidently long before accepted as inevitable the reconciliation of Charles, William, and Edward; and the storm of anger aroused by Henry's reception into the Church soon died down, to be succeeded by a calm of forty years. His ultimate relations with his sons were not affected by the fact that they were Catholics; and this alone would speak for the strength of the man; since indifference was a fault which could never be laid to his charge.

He had married (1818) Esther Fair,[7] daughter of an illustrious family which had made its mark on English History, especially during the Great Rebellion. Colonel Robert Phayre was one of the two men charged with

[7] The name is spelt variously. The older form was Phayr, or Phayre. They were descended in the female line from the family of Herbert of Tintern.

drawing up the death-warrant of Charles I, though his name is not among the signatories; and in the same year (1649) Cromwell writes of his intention of sending "Colonel Faire" to Cork. Thomas Fair (1764-1802), Father Reginald's maternal grandfather, was a distinguished explorer and discoverer[8] who sailed at least once round the world, and died in Demerara. His younger brother, Robert, who was buried at St. Helena, commanded H.M.S. Conway. The love of the sea and of travel was thus in the veins of Father Reginald and his brothers from both sides of the family.

Of his mother there is no need to speak. He himself has described her, and what he owed to her gentle piety. She had lost her eldest son (John Thomas Matheson), a lad of sixteen, five years before Henry's birth in 1840. Charles, the eldest surviving son (1824-1905), the chosen soul destined to lead his three brothers into the Church, was an architect and artist like his father and grandfather. He it was who, years later, built the fine Dominican Church at Haverstock Hill—one among many of the monuments to his genius. He was distinguished also for his wide knowledge of heraldry and genealogy; and was (1880) created by Royal Warrant Surrey Herald-Extraordinary; in which capacity he took part in the Jubilee procession of 1887. He had been received into the Church in 1844; taking in Confirmation the name of Alban (1845). In 1851 he married Mary Louisa Farbrother, daughter of an Oxford Professor, who immediately followed her husband into the Church.

[8] Fair's Island was named after him.

In 1840, when Henry Chessell Buckler was born, the family was living in what is to-day known as Kennington—then almost in the country. It consisted of his three elder brothers and a little sister—happily still surviving—two years older than himself. In 1843 another sister was born, who has only recently died. It is from the lips of Miss Buckler herself that we are able to gather the few facts which help us to reconstitute those early days.

"The house was in a row," she tells us; "close to Dodington Grove, but I cannot remember its name. There was a garden both at front and back. In front of the house was a laburnum tree, planted there by an elder brother, John, who died before I was born. This tree was much cherished by my mother. We children played mostly in the back garden. At the bottom of this was a mound. Henry (Father Reginald) used to climb the mound in order to feed a cow which lived in a field on the other side of the wall. I remember, too, that a friend in Dodington Grove had a cuckoo clock, and Henry and I often ran in to see it strike twelve.

"In his school days, and even before them, he showed a talent for drawing, inherited from his father and grandfather. Before he was twelve years old he filled three sketchbooks with architectural drawings, including the interiors of Westminster Abbey and Christ Church, Oxford. They were all chiefly old castles and churches. He used to spend his holidays with his mother and sister [the youngest], sketching, and travelling from place to place. He was a funny little fellow, never joining in sports and games at school, but studious, and finding his recreation in drawing and music. He never had music lessons, but from a tiny child he would play things he had heard on the piano. I remember him, with a schoolfellow, ex-

temporising duets; himself taking the bass, and his harmonies were seldom out. Later on he taught himself to play the organ. There were only two years between us, but in our nursery days I never remember him to have been naughty; nor to have been in any sort of disgrace.

"We were all great walkers, and used to take long walks about London and the parks. My brothers would take me to see the sights: St. Paul's, the Polytechnic, and Westminster Abbey being those I remember best.

"Well do I recollect the lessons in heraldry which Charles used to give his brothers and sisters. In sending you this most precious coat-of-arms[9] I still remember the correct heraldic terms in which to describe it. I also remember the guessing games we loved to play, sitting round the fire in the dark on winter evenings: 'I've got a basket,' and others like it. At Christmas we all specially enjoyed playing at snap-dragon. But the thing the boys enjoyed most of all was preaching sermons to the rest of us. This they did by turns, from an improvised pulpit in the garden."

Such are the delightful recollections of an old lady of ninety years who has not forgotten her happy youth. But the full story of his early life shall be given to us by Father Reginald himself.

[9] Of the Buckler family; exquisitely illuminated. It was executed by Mr. Charles Buckler in later life.

Chapter II

"HENRY'S LITTLE HISTORY"[1]

I

"Henry first saw the light in England's great metropolis during the first half of the nineteeth century, soon after Queen Victoria had begun her long reign of sixty years. He was born in an atmosphere of art. His grandfather, father, and brother were all artists of the first water. Their splendid pencil and coloured drawings of England's wonders, in her Cathedrals, Abbeys, churches, and mansions, adorned and enriched the walls and drawers of the various homes in which he lived. To this day they remain in all their pristine beauty; but most of them are buried with signal honour . . . . and the utmost reverence in the shelves and drawers of the British . . . . and South Kensington Museums in London, where they are free to be seen for the asking. Large numbers are in the [Taunton] Museum. The Duke of Norfolk owns one of special beauty, and many others are entirely lost sight of in private homes.

"It was said of Henry that he was 'born with a pencil in his mouth.' From his earliest years indeed, he began to use it, quite easily, and as it were, natur-

[1] This autobiography was written by Father Reginald for the *Catholic News* of Trinidad, at the request of the Very Rev. Fr. Lewis Casey, O.P., now Vicar-General of Grenada. This is expressly stated in Father Reginald's correspondence. The original has been slightly abridged.

ally. In 1844 Henry was sent to school at Oxford, where his father and grandfather had done some of their noble works for the colleges of the University.[2] Henry was not yet a Catholic, and the whole school went on Sundays to the University church—St. Mary's—where Newman had been vicar, and preached his celebrated Parochial Sermons. Indeed, when Henry first reached Oxford, Newman was still there, at Littlemore . . . . resting in retreat after the broils of the Oxford Movement; and writing his *Development*, which brought him to his *Nunc Dimittis* at its last page. Pusey was living cosily at Christ Church, and once or twice Henry sat under him in the pulpit of St. Mary's. Dr. Elvey was organist there: and from him Henry received his first and lasting impressions of the rendering of Handel's music on the organ.

"Music was born in Henry, just like the sister-art. He used to notice the beautiful composition of the 'double chants,' as they were called, and regularly sung at St. Mary's, and in still finer style at the chapels

[2] John Chessell Buckler, Henry's father, restored the chapel and choristers' school of Magdalen; the exterior of Jesus College; the tower-gateways of Oriel and Brasenose; the belfry, spire, pinnacles, and statuary of St. Mary's. The artist's eldest living son, Charles, assisted him in these works; and was himself a distinguished architect. Father Reginald says in a letter to their sister (1917): "I have a beautiful photograph of the [Winchester] Altar screen by me, as restored by Charles. I think one of the proudest works of his life was to put the Saints back into their places on that screen. As a design I believe there is nothing like it in the world. The one at St. Alban's Abbey is like it; but I've never heard of the Saints returning there. Charles, as you may remember, was not allowed to put the Crucifix in the middle of the screen. The bare cross remained. But a subsequent artist did it, by the Dean's consent; and it was well done. So now that screen is perfect and unique." In another letter he gives many other details of his brother's fine work, especially that at Arundel Castle.

of Magdalen and New College. Then he would come home, and pick the chants out on the piano by memory and ear. Henry used to wait in the ante-chapels beforehand, admiring the splendid architecture and stained glass. Then Dr. Bloxam would walk in at the end of the procession, with his scarlet D.D. hood. Henry looked into his face as though to say: 'Take me with you!' And he took the boy into the choir, where of course he assisted at the service, so enjoying the chants, anthems, and playing of the organ. It was the same at New College, and the Cathedral, where Dr. Gaisford, the Greek scholar, was Dean.

"One day Henry paid a visit to the Dean, little boy that he was, and all alone, in order to obtain leave to sketch in the Cathedral. The Dean was the first Don in Oxford, and people were very much amused to know little Henry had called upon him. He was not only very Greek but very gruff. However, Henry was shown into the Deanery, and found the Doctor standing in his room. 'What do you want?' said the Dean.

"'If you please, sir, I came to ask your leave to sketch in the Cathedral.'

"'You may go,' he said. This seemed a bit equivocal.

"'Then your word will be sufficient?' the boy rejoined. 'If not I'll see you again.' And Henry went round to the Cathedral. And all was right. He sketched St. Frideswide's shrine—an elaborate piece of work for a little boy.

"Part of our school duty was to read out loud chapters in the bible. Henry had his own bible, and feels grateful to this day for having known the Scriptures

from his youth. Even in those days he began the practice (maintained through life) of marking notable texts with a pencil. Religion was part of Henry's life from the first. In the meantime Newman had 'gone over,' and Henry's two elder brothers had gone over too. And Ward, Oakley, Manning, Dalgairns, Wilberforce, Allies, Lockhart, and so many others had gone over. Pusey stayed behind, and Keble too. 'High Church' and 'Low Church' were both active—the High looking Romeward; the Low, down upon Rome. Henry inclined to the 'High,' naturally. So he would mark his texts in his bible which told for Catholicism, such as: 'Thou are Peter,' and the rest. One or two of his companions felt with him. But we dared not say much.

"At St. Mary's all was quite Low. But there was a small church on the outskirts of the city, St. Thomas', where they were quite 'High,' as was felt in those days, but nothing like the developments of after years. Here Henry and his friend[3] . . . . would manage, somehow or other, quite *sub rosa,* to get along to evening service—how this was managed, *inscio magistro,* Henry cannot now recall. But managed it was. Mr. Chamberlain was the vicar there, and Dr. Romiston-Russell and Thornton of St. John's (as he was called) helped him. Henry used

[3] Fred Farbrother, son of the headmaster of the school Henry attended. Fred too was very musical. It was with him that the extemporised duets were played which caused so much amusement to Henry's family. He was, says his sister, Henry's "special school chum." "Farbrother's School" was in St. John's Road. Charles Alban Buckler married a daughter of Mr. Farbrother in 1851.

vastly to enjoy these services, with cross and candles on the altar, and bowings of the head at the 'Glory be,' and the Oxford hoods well turned over the surplices to show their red, as though looking like chasubles; extempore sermons and severe chants, none of which things we had at St. Mary's.

"Meantime Henry had got to know Frederick George Lee, then an undergraduate at St. Edmund Hall, one of the smaller colleges. He became afterwards one of the very first leaders of High-Church teaching and practice in England. Littledale and Lee were the two leading men in after years: Littledale a bitter anti-Roman; Lee a pro-Roman. The former was editor of the *Church Times* [a paper] anti-Roman to this day; the latter, editor of the *Church News*, long ago extinct, maybe for its inner Roman spirit. Littledale died out of the Church. Lee died in it. But he submitted only about a month before his death. In more recent years Henry visited Lee, when he was vicar of All Saints, Lambeth. He told Henry that he had written a hundred books! *Mirabile dictu*! He added that he had never, to his knowledge, written *against* the Church (as Littledale had). Thus, he had the grace of Faith at the end. What a humble funeral Lee had, at St. George's Catholic Cathedral in London. His Anglican friends abandoned him. And he had but short time for making Catholic friends. But among the few present at his funeral was Henry, perhaps his oldest friend living!

II.

"Henry stayed at Oxford for his school life from the age of four-and-a-half to that of fifteen, so that he was there a good ten years. He used, however, to go home to London for his holidays twice every year, summer and winter; so that his early life was passed between Oxford and London; but Oxford had by far the larger share. Thus his inborn love of architecture was always fostered and furthered by the best of models around him in the beautiful city.[4] And so it was with music. The splendid organ-playing by Dr. Elvey at St. Mary's has never been lost on Henry, even to the present day; and the beautiful singing . . . . as heard at Magdalen, New College, and the Cathedral has always been to him ideal.

"When he came back to London for the holidays he would make for Westminster Abbey. Henry did at Westminster what he had done at Christ Church, Oxford—called on the Dean and asked for leave to sketch in the Abbey. It was granted quite easily—a ticket sent to him—and with this he passed all the vergers of the Abbey, and was free to spend the day amidst the chapels and royal tombs of the glorious pile. Parties would come round escorted by a verger, with 6d. each to pay, and Henry was there, free, all

[4] Miss Buckler says that Henry and his younger sister were always taken to the sea-side in the summer holidays by their mother; but some place with an old church or castle was always chosen, as the boy was never content unless he "could be always sketching something." She remembers this trait even as a very small child. He always sketched buildings, not landscapes. When the family came to live in Oxford (about 1854-5) they had a house in Holywell. Henry was "never content unless he could be sketching something architectural."

to himself, with pencil and sketchbook in hand. He sketched the tombs of Kings and Abbots, and the very highly-wrought arch of entrance to Henry VII's chapel—a well-known feature in the Abbey.

"Besides this, Henry attended the services in this most beautiful of churches. In those days Turle was organist. Somehow the surroundings lend themselves to the harmonies of the choir and the music of the organ. Never do these sound more effective and soul-stirring than when given under the stone-groined roof of a Cathedral—and Westminster's stone groin is a hundred feet high! Then its architecture is a combination of purity and majesty. The pillars high—their arches sharply pointed—their mouldings manifold—the triforium above them, the richest and finest in the country, if not in the world—and above that the high clerestory—rose-windows in the transepts, after the French style—and an apse finishing the choir, also *à la Française*.

"With these surroundings Henry was there in the choir, just below the Dean's seat, and looking straight along the apse. How he loved the music in such a glorious place! Among the many chants he heard . . . . there was one he called the 'Westminster chant' . . . . and to this day he remembers every note of it, and sometimes reproduces it, even in his long after-life, when he finds a piano to sit to. How well he remembers Boyce's anthem: 'O where shall wisdom be found,' Handel's 'Rejoice greatly,' and Mendelssohn's 'If with all your hearts ye truly seek Me.' All these impressions are indelible, and so many more like them.

"In those days Henry played the piano from memory, and not from note. In after years he learned notes, scales, and time, and became a regular organist. Handel was his ideal man!—what a love has Henry for Handel's *Messiah*! He has heard it in all perfection at the Albert Hall, with Sims Reeves singing: 'Thou shalt break them—Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.' These words—in these days [1915]—are Henry's prayer for our enemies at war with our peace-loving country.

"From early years it was Henry's ambition to see the English Cathedrals, as being the great masterpieces of English architecture. His grandfather and father had both drawn them out in perfect style, and published them, so that Henry knew well what all the Cathedrals were like. Westminster was his first love. In his holidays, therefore, Henry aimed at seeing some new Cathedral or other. Rochester was the first, perhaps (after Oxford) he ever saw. Then he went to Canterbury, a much grander church, sketching at both places. Another holiday took him to Worcester, Chepstow Castle, and Tintern Abbey—and now his love for the beauties of nature as well as of art began to grow, for the River Wye, from Chepstow to Tintern, is indeed an exquisite scene. From Worcester Henry went to Malvern, which gave him his first impressions of mountain scenery—for the Malvern Hills have quite the mountain character, though they rise no higher than 1,400 feet. Yet they are peaked, and to Henry peaks have always been, and still are, a fascination. A visit to Gloucester also made part of

the holiday. The tower of Gloucester is unique—a masterpiece of design and proportion.

"Before the holidays were over, Henry would be taken to see his grandfather, a venerable and renowned artist . . . . and Grandpapa would put a bright shilling into the boy's hand—and all boys know how they enjoy something of that kind when they return to school! Back again to Oxford. Henry was soon at all his school-work as before.

"From very early years the love of his bible, especially of the Psalms, had been instilled into him both by Father and Mother, and even in those days he had his favourite Psalms. He loved the 22nd, the 24th, the 50th, the 102nd, and still loves them.[5] His grandmother had taught him to think on the 5th chapter of St. Matthew, and Henry was called upon to read it aloud to her . . . . Thus Henry's knowledge of the Scriptures began in his earliest years. In Latin he used the Eton Grammar, Nepos, Cæsar, Virgil, and Horace; in Greek, principally Xenophon. Poetry developed only gradually, but strongly, in after life.

III.

"In Henry's early days at Oxford Charles Marriott was the vicar of St. Mary's. He was one of Newman's friends and associates in the Oxford Movement. Readers of Newman's *Apologia* may remember his tender references to Charles Marriott, as being 'a very dear friend': and how Marriott wrote to Newman, shortly before his submission to Rome, as the one he

[5] The numbers are evidently those of the Douai version.

loved 'best on earth': and how Newman, on the very eve of his reception, wrote: 'My best love to Charles Marriott. This will not go till all is over.' But Marriott never followed his dear friend into the Church. Faith is a gift and a Grace, and not all are in a disposition to receive it. It seems Marriott had softening of the brain in his later days. [At St. Mary's] he occupied exactly Newman's former place. . . . Both were Oriel men. Marriott used always to read his sermons from a black-covered MS. book. His voice was very gentle and refined, but he had no pretence at oratory. Henry used to like any opportunity he could find of speaking to Mr. Marriott. . . .

"In those days Dr. Routh was President at Magdalen, and Dr. Hawkins Provost at Oriel; both among Newman's old friends. Dr. Wilberforce was Bishop of Oxford, and well does Henry remember his preaching an anti-Roman sermon at St. Mary's on the 11th of November. Dr. Thomson, who became Archbishop of York, was Head of Queen's; Dr. Harrington of Brasenose; Dr. Plumptre of University; Dr. Cotton of Worcester College; Dr. MacBride of Magdalen Hall.[6] At certain times of the year the 'University Sermons' were given in St. Mary's, when the church was crowded, undergraduates filling the galleries; graduates and Dons downstairs. The procession of the Dons, Vice-Chancellor, and preacher entering the church from the chapel called after Adam de Brome was a sight hardly to be forgotten. First the 'silver pokers'—the maces, emblems of office. . . . But

[6] To this last Mr. Farbrother was attached.

stay here—Newman has himself described this procession in his *Loss and Gain,* 'Charles' being his *alter ego.* . . . Newman himself preached at least fifteen University Sermons; and we have them now among his *Opera Omnia.* Henry used sometimes to attend the University Sermon. He remembers Dr. Coulburn preaching, and Thomson of Queen's, and Dr. Pusey and Mr. Burgon. Dr. Elvey used to finish the service with some of Handel's splendid choruses on the organ . . . . the *Occasional Overture*—Handel's masterpiece, as Henry always thinks. Its introduction is majestic—quite an inspiration—and the fugue following is simplicity and majesty combined. But it seems to need a vocation to render Handel properly—it wants the Handelian *spirit.* Some have it and some not. Those without it had better leave Handel alone.

"Before Henry was fifteen years old his three brothers had all 'gone over' to Rome, to use the common expression. His elder brother, Charles, had long been both an artist and an architect . . . . and the other two brothers, William and Edward, were at Old Hall, preparing for the priesthood. Henry was already High Church at Oxford, and inclining to Rome. He needed a helping hand, and it was given him by Edward. Meanwhile William had put on the white habit at Woodchester, and Edward's idea was to take Henry there with him, at least as a visitor. Henry happened at this time to be taking a holiday tour in the West of England, and was now at Worcester with his mother and sister; and so not far from Woodchester.

"One day Edward appeared, saying that he wanted Henry to go with him to Woodchester. This was a

sad blow to his mother, who was of the pious Evangelical type, and dreaded Rome. She had abundance of natural religion, but little dogma. She could 'find Christ' either at the Low Anglican or Wesleyan service, as long as she found hearty music and good preachers. But the High Anglican or the Roman were not for her. She was something of a contemplative, and realised the Divine Presence in the beauties of nature. Henry was her favourite son, and it went to her heart to have him torn away from her in the midst of the pleasant surroundings she had prepared for him. But so it was. Edward had an iron will, and Henry bent to it, feeling that he could hardly take the step alone. So the two brothers left th mother and sister behind them at Worcester and reached Woodchester before evening.

"Here Henry soon began to breathe the Catholic atmosphere. So much depends upon surrounding influences. . . . To be taught by the Catholic Church is Catholicism; to believe what we like is eclecticism, which has for its off-spring all the heresies and sects which exist. Thus Henry made his profession of the Catholic Faith before the High Altar at Woodchester, and received conditional Baptism. He felt at once 'strong in Faith,' received his First Communion; and then returned to Oxford, Charles and Edward being there with him.

"His father, so kind in his nature, and loving to his children, now showed himself utterly averse from Henry, who was the fourth and last son who had 'gone over.' . . . . Just the four brothers came. Father, mother, sisters never came. Henry and his

brothers soon saw the situation. His father kept his anger to himself, and said nothing. But, sitting down to breakfast all together, he launched out severely: 'Well, Mr. Henry, how have you been spending your time—or rather, mis-spending it?' Henry left his brothers to defend him. After a time his father said sternly to Henry: 'You will have to come to church with me on Sunday.' But Henry's instinct told him *that should not be,* come what may.

"Sunday came. His father was very determined to do what he said.[7] But the three brothers made a phalanx. Henry made for the door: a scrimmage ensued; and Henry managed to escape; rushed downstairs; out of the house; and quick as he could go up the High Street, over Magdalen Bridge, and far along to St. Clement's, where was the old and only Catholic chapel in Oxford in those days [1855]. Henry was early for the Mass, and the two brothers came afterwards. They reported the troubled state of home, and it was felt best for Henry not to return. He and Edward agreed to take the Sunday train back to Woodchester at once; and the tender-hearted father found their places vacant at the table. Naturally he would feel it all. Henry and Edward re-entered Woodchester church just as the Fathers were coming out of Choir singing the *Salve* at the end of Compline. Of course they came to Henry as soon as the Office was over, and he told them his tale. This made a second visit to Woodchester for Henry.

[7] "Now, Mr. Henry, get your boots on!" said Mr. Buckler to the child, as Father Reginald loved to relate. Henry trembled and quaked, but he did not put his boots on, feeling that in that simple act he would be making a surrender of conscience.

"After a while Henry went to London—for he had long had a double home; one in Oxford, one in London; and at this time his mother was . . . . at Richmond-on-Thames. Thither Henry went. He used to attend the old-fashioned Catholic chapel there, in the days of Canon Holdstock; his mother reconciled herself to the inevitable. After about three months news came from Oxford that his father was all himself again, and ready to have Henry with him. So Henry returned as a Catholic to Oxford. In the meantime Edward had donned the white habit at Woodchester. Before he left home Henry remembers how Edward threw a nice handkerchief away from him in the room, saying: 'There—good-bye to the silks and satins of the world!' And Henry was jealous. He would have liked to have done the same, but he was too young; yet his heart was in the cloister. His two brothers were now at Woodchester; and Henry longed to be there too. It was his first love. He knew no other Religious House.

"He wrote to the Prior, the dear Father Aylward, begging that he might come. But he was *so* young, both in years (for he was not yet sixteen) and in the Faith! And so he was put off. But he was not to be put away, and he returned after a time to his petition. Of course he needed his father's consent. This was asked, and the loving father took a natural view of the case, and thought it would be pleasant for Henry to be with his brothers. And so it came to pass on January 31st, 1856, only about seven months after Henry's reception into the Church at Woodchester, that he returned there, to his great joy, as a postulant for the white habit. And he went through his novitiate

with no sort of misgivings as to his vocation; made his solemn profession (before simple vows had become law); and has borne the white habit ever since.

IV.

"It was indeed quick working in a very serious business. But so it was. Henry kept his sixteenth birthday in the white habit.[8] Many might have said: 'It is not fair to the poor boy; it is not discretion.' 'Let him have a taste of the world first—he should be there till he is twenty,' and the rest. But Henry had no taste for the world. His whole bent and drawing were to the cloister. So let us trust that Providence arranged it all for the best. Certain it is that Henry was all happy when he got back to Woodchester, and had no thought of ever returning again to 'the world.' Both the Prior of Woodchester and his own brother suggested that Henry should wait. How was it then? Let us hope that Henry was not rashly importunate. But he did return—may it be said—to the charge: and possibly *propter importunitatem* he was taken in.

"All this is ancient history now. On the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas, March 7th, 1856, Henry was clothed in the white habit, and was of course youngest in every way of all the novices. Vincent King, who was afterwards consecrated Coadjutor Bishop for Port of Spain, but died before reaching the island, was in the novitiate then, and he and Henry soon became

[8] Father Reginald writes (1926) to a Religious: "I *put on* the white habit on Jan. 31st, 1856, but received it formally on the following Feast of the Angelic Doctor, which reckons my 'clothing' day."

great friends. Brother Vincent was the organist, and Henry aspired to become one, and did indeed succeed Brother Vincent. Brother Vincent was very fond of Handel's music . . . . and so was the Prior; and often Vincent would sing to himself along the garden walk 'But Thou didst not leave His soul in hell' . . . . and other favourite airs, looking smilingly at Henry as they passed in the garden during silence-time. Lewis Weldon and Paul Stapleton were in the novitiate then; but both, with Vincent King, professed novices. The simple novices numbered about ten, with Raymund Palmer, Antonius Williams, Pius Cavanagh, Thomas Greenough (who came afterwards to Trinidad, and whose name is still in benediction), John Bennett, Edmund Buckler, and Henry his young brother—youngest of all. Albert Buckler, eldest of the three, was assistant Novice-Master.

"We used to have midnight matins in our novitiate days,[9] and the diet was severe. Father Tom Burke, of Irish celebrity, was at Woodchester a little before this—a young and clever priest lent for a time to the English Province. His first sermon was preached at Nympsfield, a small country village near Woodchester; and it is said that he showed no great promise as a preacher then. . . .

"The older Fathers of the Province at this time were Samuel Procter, Thomas Nickolds, Austin Mal-

[9] Father Reginald would sometimes speak of the exceeding strictness of the Observance under the rule of a French Prior, lent to Woodchester by his Provincial to instruct the budding English Province in the manner of Père Lacordaire. But midnight Matins had to be discontinued. "There was something in the *physique* of the English Fathers that could not stand it." Was it through this Religious that he came to know (as he says) Père Chocarne?

tus, Peter Sablon, Bernard Morewood—all long ago passed away. They were stationed as Missioners at Hinckley, Leicester, Nuneaton and Stone, where Mother Margaret's Community of Dominican Sisters had settled. Thus, Woodchester was the only house in England where the Dominican Community Life and Observance were carried out.

"The study of the New Testament, the *Imitation of Christ,* and Rodriguez on *Christian Perfection* were the principal books on which we depended for our spirituality. And truly they are enough, if they are but well-considered, and applied to action. Henry ever loved them all, and still loves them. . . . Besides these, however, which were for the common use of all, Henry found other spiritual books in the library, which he took for his own special use. Among these were the *Spiritual Combat,* the works of Bernier de Louvigny, Olier's *Catechism of Interior Life*, and Lallemant's *Spiritual Doctrine.* Henry never had a taste for reading novels. It has been said that he never read even one.[10] And this is about the truth. . . . After

[10] Until (1904) *By What Authority* appeared. Father Reginald certainly read several of Monsignor Benson's novels. Asked by a mutual friend what he thought of *A Winnowing,* which had lately come out, he replied: "It is founded on false premisses. For if the husband really and actually died, then the marriage-tie was dissolved, and his wife was no longer his wife. The argument is that he did actually die, and that a miracle was wrought through his wife's prayers. I wonder Benson didn't think of this." On this judgment being passed on to Monsignor Benson he literally jumped in his chair, exclaiming after a moment's horrified silence: "*I never thought of that!*" Of *Lord of the World* Father Reginald wrote to the same friend: "What do you think of it? Might it not cut both ways?" But he was a sincere admirer of Monsignor Benson's genius, and was delighted with his attack on Spiritualism in *The Necromancers.*

receiving the white habit spiritual books first, then philosophy and theology engaged him. He soon formed the habit of taking notes and extracts from Scripture, from theology, from holy books, and in time these became so many *répertoires* where he was able to find abundance of matter useful both to himself and to others. When he had finished his philosophy and theology in the schools he began to think for himself. Spiritual doctrine was always his favourite study—it ever seemed to him the most soul-satisfying of all. . . . . Our end being Union with God, the question is by what means is that union to be effected? The answer is *Per Caritatem.*[11]

"It was a long time—several years—before this great reality dawned on Henry's mind. . . . He loved to study the works of the Angelic Doctor by himself—*con amore*—without any of the formalities of the schools. Many and long were the extracts [both in the *Summa* and the *Opuscula* of the Saint] Henry made in this way. Henry noticed the quotations from the Fathers in the *Articles* of St. Thomas. What could he do but go to the Fathers himself? And he went to Augustine, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Gregory, and especially to the Fathers of the Desert, in Cassian; and he found in them the same truth, that Charity is the great Reality. How pronounced is St. Augustine upon this! How pronounced the Abbot Moses in Cassian! There was a *consensus* among them all. How could it be otherwise, with Our Lord's words in the

[11] This doctrine has been so fully and frequently developed by Father Reginald in his writings that his recapitulation is omitted here.

Gospel, and St. Paul's ever-to-be-remembered teaching? Then Henry went to St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Francis of Sales, St. Alphonsus—and the teaching was the same: Union with God by Charity as a habit, disposed to its acts. The great Jesuit writers, Suarez and Scaramelli, are in exact agreement with it all.

"With all the material Henry had now got by him in his *répertoires*—for when he went to the Fathers he culled from them their choicest words—he began to build his little edifice, which now goes by the name of *CARITAS*. . . . The building took Henry about nine years. Twenty-one years later Henry overhauled the entire work, leaving out much, putting more in, and rebuilding the whole afresh. Thus he has left it for the use of posterity."[12]

[12] The reference is to the *Perfection of Man by Charity*. See Chapter VIII.

Chapter III

FIFTY-FIVE YEARS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

The Archives of the English Province are our only available source for the history of Father Reginald's early Dominican life. He, when he died, was the *doyen* of the Fathers. Most of his friends of long ago had already passed away. The recollections of the oldest among them cannot, naturally, carry them back seventy-two years; and though letters, documents, and diaries of Father Reginald's relating to the first thirty years of his priesthood may, and probably do exist, the only papers of his available between 1856 and 1883 (at which later date begins the sequence of letters to a Religious from which extracts are given in the following chapter) are in the form of a diary, dated 1870.

If his life was "devoid of incident," as was recently said by one of his friends, it was not devoid of interest, nor of activities. It included frequent change of duties; continuous and ardent work for souls; and much travelling—a good deal of which was necessary on account of his very delicate health as a young priest. Thus, he was sent to Malvern for the water-cure in 1867; and on holiday to the Scottish Highlands in 1870. If his earlier life in a certain sense were devoid of incident, the same might be said of that of St. Thomas Aquinas, who passed so much of his in his cell; while that of St. Louis Bertrand, Father Reginald's model during the last sixteen years in Grenada, was certainly an apostolate full of varied details, toil and

travel; of strenuous adventure in strange surroundings, under tropic skies.

To quote the official records:—

"Being at home [in Oxford] for the holidays at midsummer, 1855, went to Woodchester; and (July 10) was received into the Church. Left home for Woodchester (Jan. 31, 1856). Received the habit (March 7, 1856) from the Prior (Fr. Aylward); and was solemnly professed (March 7, 1857).[1] Ordained by the Bishop of Clifton at Woodchester: Minor Orders (Dec. 19, 1857); Subdiaconate (Sept. 21, 1861); Diaconate (Sept. 20, 1862); and Priesthood (Sept. 19, 1863). Sang his first Mass on Sept. 21 with his brothers as Deacon and Sub-deacon, in the Priory Church. Faculties for confessions (Dec. 21, 1864; Dec. 18, 1867; and Jan. 31, 1871). Appointed organist (April 29, 1857, and Jan. 24, 1866); Sacristan (Sept. 18, 1863, and Oct. 18, 1865); but resigned on becoming Curate of the parish, and held this latter charge for two years, till his health gave way."

And so on for three closely-typed pages, which lack of space forbids our reproducing as they stand. Malvern, Marychurch, Littlehampton, Taunton ("for rest"); a year in London; Leicester (1868) "as missionary coadjutor, serving Market Harborough weekly and Husbands' Bosworth occasionally." Then Clifton, "living in the Bishop's House and serving the Tertiary Sisters"; Arno's Court, Stone, Leicester, Woodchester again, with an interval at Carisbrooke; then back to London, where in 1873 he was organist, Cantor, and Procurator; soon resigning the last two offices for "exclusive parochial work." Thence to

[1] He was the last novice in England to take solemn vows at the age of seventeen. His name in Religion was Reginald Francis. The second name he never used.

[*Phot. M. Gildea, London.*

FR. REGINALD BUCKLER AT THE AGE OF FORTY.

Newcastle-on-Tyne (1878); Woodchester again (1879-1884), where he was Guest-master for a time, and was appointed *Moderator Casus Conscientiæ* in 1883; Carisbrooke (1884-86); Lymington (supply); then once more at Haverstock Hill, where he was Master of the lay-brothers and (1894) Depositarian.

It is hard to imagine that much time was left for private study, to say nothing of literary work in such a crowded life as this. Nevertheless as we shall see it was during his early years in Religion that Father Reginald conceived the plan of his great book: *The Perfection of Man by Charity,* at which he diligently laboured in and out of season, utilising especially his peaceful two years at Carisbrooke for the continual revision, copying, and re-copying to which he subjected his MS.

In 1893 he made his first memorable visit to Italy, when he went to Rome for the Holy Father's episcopal Jubilee. He spent about two months in what was thenceforth to him "the country of the soul"; and his return journey he made in a manner all his own. He loved to tell how, on leaving Rome, he applied to the Vicar-General, O.P.[2] (in the absence of the Master) for permission to travel slowly back, as far as possible on foot, exploring the country, equipped with stick and knapsack; making friends with the peasants; and sketching his beloved peaks, mountain villages, and *campanili.*[3] He would laugh quietly as he quoted the

[2] "A most sweet old man. He quite took me into his arms."

[3] Two of these beautiful little sketches, delicately finished in pencil and washed in with water-colour, are in the writer's possession. They represent Cortona and Sarzana.

Vicar-General's reply: *"Fac hoc"*; and the ensuing weeks were probably among the happiest of his life. His sketchbooks contained treasures brought back from this pilgrimage; treasures which from the artistic standpoint alone are worth preserving. Perhaps the diary which he certainly kept of this journey may one day be recovered. But that of a much earlier journey to Scotland still exists.

It is written on the interleaves of a little, battered brown-covered *Ordo* for 1870 (in the writer's possession), in fine, clear, delicate writing of which every word is legible, though the pencil script is sometimes microscopic. On the cover, above the Arms of the Order, he has printed his own name in Old-English characters. On the first page is written in pencil: *"Notes from Scotland. 1870."*

The book contains exactly forty sketches, of which thirty-five are exquisitely finished; representing every place of note he saw. Here are Lochs Ness, Oich, Carron, Duich—this last, of exceptional beauty, is sketched from four different point—and Shiel, etc. "Well-balanced peaks," as he loved to call them, appear on every page. All the big Bens of the Highlands are here. There are three wonderful pictures of the Pass of Glencoe—wonderful because within the space of a few square inches, with nothing but a fine, hard pencil, the artist has managed to convey not merely a striking representation, but the actual atmosphere of the terrible Pass. Some of these little gems are worthy of the genius of Blake. There are cascades, rivers, forests, sea-ports, mountain—and even cloud-ranges; the latter rubbed in softly, like pastels, with surprising

breadth and realistic effect. It almost seems as if he felt the hard, grey lead of his pencil to be a paint-brush dipped in colour; for one of the last of the series is called: "*Sunrise near Oban.*" It is the most intensely characteristic thing in the whole book.

The wonder is that he could have condensed the whole of his journey into eighteen closely-written pages of text. He started from Bristol on August 18th, 1870, going by boat to Glasgow and touching at Belfast *en route*. Thence on foot or on wheels into the heart of the Highlands. The date of his return is not given, but the holiday lasted at least a month.

It is impossible to close this diary, the earliest existing MS. in Father Reginald's writing, without giving a few extracts from it. Would that the whole could be quoted as it stands!

"Early on Sunday morning we were in Glasgow. I rose, and drove to the Franciscans. They were brotherly kind to me. After early Mass in their temporary church I walked down to the pro-Cathedral, and was just in time for the children's Mass. The Irish were streaming into the church. Poor women came with shawls over the head, and children without bonnet, shoes, or stockings. It warmed the heart to see such crowds of poor: the body of the large church filled with children, and the galleries with adults. I could say no prayers, but simply meditated on the scene before me. It did the soul good to witness it.

"Fr. Emmanuel, the Superior of the Franciscans, took me out in the afternoon. We first visited the old Cathedral. It is of the purest and richest Early-English style: the interior is grand; the arch-mouldings the finest I have ever seen anywhere; the crypt of severe, pointed period, lofty, well-lighted, spacious, and in

excellent preservation and condition—the finest crypt, I suppose, in the Kingdom. I gazed again and again on the beautiful columns and mouldings of the choir arches, and thought I had never seen anything like them. This grand old Catholic edifice is now devoted to Presbyterian worship."

Of Ben Lomond he says: "The Ben is rather too rounded-off on the summit to satisfy me; and perhaps altogether I was somewhat disappointed with the scenery of this loch, owing to what my imagination had depicted beforehand."

After seeing Loch Katrine he stayed at the Trossachs Hotel.

"In the evening I walked round Loch Achray, and stayed on the very spot where Turner has depicted it. He has unpardonably overdrawn the outlines of Ben Venue, and after admiring his pictures and longing for the realities they portray, one's estimation of the scenery suffers an unpleasant shock in viewing Nature as she is. This remark only applies to particular instances, for it would be impossible to show forth adequately the beauties of other scenes that I witnessed in Kintail and Glenfinnan. In speaking to an artist . . . . of this fault in Turner, he remarked: 'Of course it is the case. You see, *we must make a picture*!' However, I do not approve of thus falsifying Nature. It seems an injury to the truth knowingly and willingly to overdraw an object for the sake of pleasing people."

In the Pass of the Trossachs he tried a short cut:

"I was soon buried in trees and rocks, with ferns up to the armpits. I pushed on, but was completely enveloped. Onward I continued, and began to repent I had not gone by the straight road, for I was getting tired. Road or path there was none; but steep rocks ascending, sometimes perpendicularly; a forest of trees,

and thick undergrowth of branches and ferns, with huge stones in every direction, and running rivulets descending from the heights above. Truly, I shall remember the Pass of the Trossachs!"

Continuous heavy rain drove him back to Glasgow after penetrating as far east as Loch Tay. Hence he took boat to Fort William, and went up the Crinan Canal to Oban, still going north.

"The view from Ballachulish was the most beautiful I had yet seen. . . . . As we passed on our way to Fort William night overtook us, and small rain began to fall. . . . . I disembarked in the darkness of the evening, amid torrents of rain, a stranger to everyone, and not knowing where I was to lay my head for the night. Fortunately, the priest's house was close at hand."

At Fort William he unexpectedly fell in with friends, at whose great house he stayed for ten days; enjoying trout-fishing, rides, walks, drives, and picnics. Thence he travelled north to Fort Augustus and Inverness, through scenery which he found admirable, especially on Loch Ness, where they landed at Foyers.

"The walk up the wooded hills was steep, but lovely in the extreme. The spot is thoroughly romantic, and as we neared the rocky chasm the roaring of the Fall increased at every step, and the spray from the cataract was rising as a cloud of smoke. We were now at the Fall itself, and the spot is one of the loveliest I have anywhere seen. The ravine is truly grand; the rocks are cleft asunder in most romantic outline, and the river, enclosed in its rocky bed, falls down a precipice in a single cascade, spreading itself on its dash to the lower rocks, and then cutting its course down the ravine over smaller rocks and stones; winding and dashing till it reaches the lake. The

clouds of smoke-like spray rise in the air to a tremendous height, and fall back in a perpetual rain."

It was during one of his residences in London, probably in 1872-78, that an incident happened which caused the greatest excitement at the time, especially among those interested in supernatural manifestations. Possibly few among his friends know of Father Reginald's connection with it. In a letter from Grenada (1920) he says:

"I remember something of the 'ghost' in Berkeley Square, the locality you refer to. The lady there was not a Catholic, but feeling, I opine, that the Catholic ministry was the real thing, she asked a Catholic friend of mine to let a priest come to the house to 'lay' the invader. If I remember right (I am not sure) the friend was one of the Herberts of Llanarth, or a friend of hers. Anyhow, I went, and sprinkled the rooms with Holy Water, and said the prayers of the Church. Thus, I hope, favourable impressions were made."

Tantalising as it is to know no more, this is the only mention in all Father Reginald's papers, so far as is known, of what would have been—say to Monsignor Benson—a thrilling adventure. Of his early days at Haverstock Hill he has indeed left but few recollections, such as the following:—

"I was one of the early Fathers there, during the late 'sixties,' before the present church existed; the present 'hall' serving for temporary church. We had so many nice families around us in those days . . . . all disappeared now; for those times were fifty years ago!—so that I should be unknown to the people there now."

The *Rosary*, which did not then exist in its present form, had Father Reginald from early days as a fre-

quent contributor. In it he described his pilgrimage to Rome[4] and his passage of the Alps; for he was never content with enjoying nature selfishly—he always wanted to describe it to others, with the instinct of the artist. A true Dominican, he was ever "giving forth to the world the fruits of his contemplation"—and observation.

It was probably during his first journey to Italy that Father Reginald turned aside from the beaten track in France—where he visited Paray-le-Monial—to make the most remarkable acquaintance of his life—the Curé d'Ars. Him he visited in his own house; and he would surely take the opportunity of going to confession to that Saint. But beyond the fact that they had talked together, and that the Curé d'Ars had spoken (at his request) of some of the diabolical manifestations from which he suffered, Father Reginald said very little of that wonderful interview. But even before the first stage of his canonisation was accomplished, the young priest ever held the older to be a Saint. "I always like to know about the holy souls of our own time," he wrote to a friend; and his interest in, and late-born devotion to "the little Saint Teresa" (to whom he specially recommends himself in going out to Grenada) was deeply touching. She, born thirty years after himself, was canonised with the Curé d'Ars, whom he had seen and known; and his devotion to both perhaps explained in part his affection for and interest in their country, which was unaffected and constant. He had devotion also for another French Saint and shrine—

[4] He revisited Rome in 1900, staying at San Clemente.

Paray-le-Monial and St. Margaret Mary. Though he did not speak French he gladly made friends with French Religious, talking with them in Latin when broken English and broken French could go no farther. He never met Lacordaire, whom he admired so intensely; but he knew his biographer, Père Chocarne, and delighted in the *Life,* of which he speaks in many of his letters.

"Is not Lacordaire's *Life* charming? I knew the author . . . . That and the *Life of the Curé d'Ars* are two of the most interesting biographies to be had anywhere."

He certainly made the most of his various passages through France, visiting a number of the most beautiful French Cathedrals, whose architecture he preferred to any others in the world. The magnificent fragment which is Beauvais was his favourite, though Chartres ran it hard. Only six months before his death he wrote to a friend travelling in France, begging her to go to Beauvais, and send him postcards of the apse, which she did.

"The apse is always the grand feature in Cathedrals, and I always think the apse of Beauvais unapproachable. No other apse can compete with it. That is all I meant, though there are transepts with it, and these, if I mistake not, on a par with the apse. One of my special favourites is St. Ouen, Rouen; that is the exterior *ensemble.* The interior is not up to Chartres, Amiens, Rheims. You speak of Bourges . . . . though it has no transepts, which are such features in Cathedrals. . . . . I keep the picture of Beauvais apse by me to recreate my artistic sense sometimes."

He kept thus to the end the enthusiasm of a young man. One of the places in which he showed vivid interest was Prouille, the cradle of the Dominican Order. "It was only a name to me till you went there," he wrote to one whose home it was in France. It was probably in 1893, on his way home, that he visited Ulm, to see the Cathedral there; going on to Switzerland to enjoy his beloved mountains, which he was never tired of drawing.

"Do you know," he wrote from Grenada in 1911, "I am rather tender on Geneva. Have you ascended Mont Salève yet, giving the most superb views of the Mont Blanc range? . . . . I went up and slept at the hotel at the top—the *Treize Arbres* . . . . and it so happened I had there a red sunset, and it reddened the snow mountains like crimson. It was a never-to-be-forgotten scene, and I sketched it. . . . Then the Cathedral of Geneva is quite beautiful—one of my very favourite churches, and I remember sketching this interior too. You must not be bothered with Calvin's chair! It stands out, and they point to it when one is entranced with the lovely apse and early pointed arches. . . . The whole lake of Geneva is superb. . . . I took the steamer down to Montreux, and the ever-changing views of mountains capped by Mont Blanc, changing (as I saw it) from death white to rose-hued, was quite magnificent."

"The view from the Jura must be one of the finest in Europe, with Switzerland on one side and France the other. I never ascended the Jura, but only viewed them in passing. . . . Lausanne I well remember; the Cathedral in the interior is splendid. . . . I know Berne and Fribourg only in passing. . . . What can compare with the setting sun on snow mountains?"

He always treasured his sketches, memorials of those happy days.

"Now and then, if I find time, I look at my Swiss sketches, and just tint in the mountain peaks with the setting sun on them; and there I find recreation after more serious duties."

But he found beauty everywhere, especially at Woodchester,[5] which he loved. "I always feel more at home in the West of England," he wrote after returning from residence at Hawkesyard, where he held office (1905-08) as Master of Professed Novices. His life from 1893-1911 was passed here, at Haverstock Hill, or Woodchester; in all of which houses he held office, usually that of Sub-Prior or Novice Master. In 1898 he was appointed Preacher General.

Father Anthony Lowe, his first novice, writes:—

"Father Reginald was the soul of kindness and gentleness to his novices. I went to Woodchester in July, 1898, before the annual Retreat in September, and so made my Retreat alone. Father Reginald kindly wrote out all the subjects for it, and presenting them to me, said: 'These are my best thoughts, and you will find solid spiritual nutriment in them. We must always go to the Fountain-head.' He would quote some apt phrase from Horace or his beloved Newman, and say: 'That is a telling phrase.' He had the simplicity, retirement, and courtesy of a St. Francis de Sales.

"He was no staunch upholder of bodily mortifications. He preferred to teach us the higher asceticism of a mortified heart and mind. He was never ruffled; never lost his temper despite many provocations on the part of the novices, whom he trusted implicitly.

[5] Cardinal Newman visited Woodchester during Father Reginald's earlier days there. He delighted to tell how the Cardinal, looking up at Amberley, said: "It only needs a *campanile* to be Italy." The Wilberforce family, friends of both the Cardinal and of Father Reginald, was then living at Woodchester.

Though a vigilant guardian of their souls, he never sought to trap them and catch them unawares. Nearly all his discourses were on the Love of God, Faith, Humility, Purity. He never attempted to carry us to the heights of mysticism, or expatiated on its intricacies; his was the simple way of abandonment and the Love of God. His teaching harmonised with that of the young Saint of Lisieux, of whom he seemed a spiritual ancestor.

"He readily granted any reasonable dispensations without unnecessary questioning. In the weekly Chapters he never gave utterance to sharp reprimands or sarcasm. He was the most unworldly-minded of novice-masters: he cared only for God and the things of the soul.

"In the summer-time he preferred to send us into the garden to pick fruit for the cook than to the less congenial occupation of book-binding. Boorish manners and lack of refinement rather irritated him; yet he never spoke uncharitably of others. He would sometimes shrug his shoulders and say: 'So and so seems a rough diamond!'—and then smile. *Mel et lac sub lingua ejus.*

"Once when he took us out to Malvern on a very hot day for our annual holiday he gave us an example of his unconcerned simplicity. After we had climbed to the top of a hill Father Reginald took off his hat and collar, sat down, and proceeded to slide down part of the very steep hill, to the vast amusement of all who saw him."

To his gifts as a preacher witness will be borne by one of his own Order.[6] As he usually held the office of organist, especially at Woodchester, his great musical powers were evident to all who had the privilege of hearing him. He was a perfect accompanist, though

[6] See page 153.

as years grew on him he was inclined to follow, rather than lead the choir. Once seated at the organ, music poured from his long, delicate fingers as from a fountain. High Mass according to the Dominican Rite affords time enough during the Offertory for the performance of a piece of music of some length; and those who have heard Father Reginald play *O Rest in the Lord* (his favourite Mendelssohn excerpt) or the sobbing melody of *O for the Wings of a Dove* at this solemn moment, are not likely to forget it. As a harmonist accompanying plain-chant he was truly wonderful; playing of course *extempore*. It could be felt that he was literally pouring out his soul in harmony. The loss of his beloved organ, with all this implied, was one of the greatest of the sacrifices he made when he left all to go to Grenada.[7]

As a young Priest he was very fond of illuminating. Curiously enough he seems to have preserved no specimens of his skill; though perhaps some of his old friends of the sixties and seventies have been more fortunate. He refers to this pastime in several of his earliest existing letters. His peculiar gifts, one of which was the power of writing a clear and lovely script equal to that of a first-rate mediæval MS., would have exactly fitted him for such beautiful and rare work. But his vocation prevented this from being more than a simple recreation.

[7] Handel, Bach, Mendelssohn, and (later in life) Corelli, were his favourite composers. He played very beautifully certain passages of Beethoven. He was also a delightful pianist. His touch, clear and delicate, yet firm, was eminently adapted to the lighter music of Bach and Corelli—gavottes, gigues, minuets, and the simpler fugues, which he so loved. The organ which he found at St. George's, Grenada, was, in his opinion, "poor."

In considering his life, it is impossible not to feel that probably the first real, external influence which led to his uprooting from his quiet happy life in England, when he offered himself the following year for the Grenada Mission, was his first visit to Canada in 1910. From his letters there can be little doubt that he was moved as never before to consider the "vast needs of souls" in the vast fields of foreign missions when he was sent as a delegate from the English Province to the Eucharistic Congress at Montreal in October, 1910, two months after the close of the Retreat given by him to the Carthusians at Parkminster.[8] However this may be, Father Reginald enjoyed his Canadian experiences to the full; and extended his visit to the United States, where he had always taken a lively interest in the work of the growing Church, and especially of the Dominican Order.

"I had quite a delightful time in Canada. Quebec and Montreal are such Catholic cities. The voyage out was most pleasant: two Cardinals on board, six Bishops, one hundred and ten Priests, and about one hundred and sixty lay-folk. We had many Masses on board, with Rosary and Benediction in the afternoon.

"The churches and convents in Quebec and Montreal are very large. . . . The procession of the Blessed Sacrament at the end was magnificent. . . . After all was over we went to Niagara; the rapids and falls are superb. Then to Albany; and down the beautiful Hudson River to New York. I stayed with our own Dominican Fathers at Quebec, Montreal, New York,

[8] From 1898-1911 his time was greatly taken up in giving Retreats, especially to Religious Houses of women. It is impossible to enumerate these for lack of space.

and Washington—all beautiful cities. . . . On the return journey, although we were but few Catholics, yet we had Masses daily on board; getting used to the movement of the ship as we stood at the Altar.

"I never got fatigued at anything, though we had much moving about . . . . and always saying Mass very early—*e.g.*, five o'clock.

"The Catholic Cathedral (New York) is a splendid place; one of the finest of modern ones. . . . We have a large Dominican House of Studies (at Washington); thirty-nine novices in all. I was in the midst of them for recreation.

"I had a paper to read at the Congress at one of the ladies' gatherings, with the Archbishop of Westminster in the chair. It was on Our Blessed Lady in relation to the Blessed Sacrament—a beautiful and interesting theme. I didn't choose it; but it was given to me by the Congress Committee."

Less than six months after his return he had started for Grenada.

Chapter IV

CONVERTS, AND THE ANGLICAN MOVEMENT

It is impossible to estimate the number of converts reconciled by Father Reginald during the seventy-one years of his priesthood. Large as it was, the number of those he helped in their search for Truth, either by his spoken or written word, is very much larger. He had a special gift for dealing with converts, particularly with High Anglicans. His tact, tenderness, patience, and consideration for their feelings and prejudices were unrivalled. It is believed that not one of those received and instructed by him ever fell away; so thoroughly had the great dogmatic principles of Catholic teaching been drilled into them *ab initio*.

The following sketch, written by a convert of some twenty-five years ago, well illustrates his marvellous patience with a "well-willed soul" at the same time obstinate and ignorant.

"Few converts can ever have been more reluctant than I. I had left all I loved in the Church of England; had lost my work; and was to lose my family for many years immediately after my reception.

"Mother Abbess had kindly invited me to stay at the Franciscan convent, Woodchester, for the preliminary instructions. I had received several letters from Father Reginald (to whom I had been introduced by another convert of his—my only friend at the time of my arrival) before I came to Woodchester. I remember how I flared up because, in one letter, he had written: 'Don't let Mr. —— poison your mind by Littledale and Gore.' The clergyman in question was at that time my idea of a Saint, and though he had

done exactly what Father Reginald said I spoke eagerly in his defence. His answer to my excitable words made me ashamed: 'I see you better than I did,' he wrote, 'and I see too that Mr. —— is altogether an exceptional soul. Much indeed do I feel for and with you. I know, too, how awful is the wrench; and what a "searching of hearts" it all means. And I pray that you may be a loving and courageous soul.'

"I had suffered so much that mind and heart were numb with pain when I reached the convent one evening. The depth of my ignorance will be shown by the fact that I was astonished that the lay-sister who received me was English! I suppose I really believed that most nuns were foreigners.

"Mother Abbess and dear Sister Francis Teresa [Wilberforce] came at once to the parlour, and showed me the greatest kindness. Being used to High Church Sisters I had supposed I should feel quite at home with nuns; but found myself absolutely terrified. The curious foreign dress; the sensible difference between this place and any other 'convent' I had known; the very way they spoke—all these things frightened me, quite unreasonably, more than I can say. And when the door opened, after a gentle knock, and Father Reginald appeared in his white habit and *cappa,* his kind face beaming with welcome, I really nearly fainted from fright. Had it been possible to run away at that moment I would have done so. I had never seen a Religious habit before: did not even know they were worn in England. But it was more than the fact that he looked like a figure from the Middle Ages. To me, unacquainted with priests, he had something of the supernatural which is impossible to describe or define. I see and know this now more clearly than at the time when my prevailing impression was one of terror. Nor was my fear lessened when the two nuns fell on their knees and asked his blessing, which he gave them. I, too, knelt down; anxious to do the right thing, but

understanding nothing. And so it happened that the very first words he ever spoke to me were a benediction.

"He must have perceived my terror; for as soon as the nuns had left us he made me sit near him in a big chair, and began to talk to me quietly. But I could hardly summon courage to answer him, and in a couple of minutes he turned and looked me in the face. I was feeling just this: 'Here I am in a trap. I shall never get out of it. *Why* did I come?' 'Have you had any tea?' he enquired, to my amazement; and to my faltering reply: 'I thought as much.' Ten minutes later we were both sitting in the little refectory of the Guest-house. I was chatting merrily away as if I had known him all my life; and wondering what my home people would say if they could see me pouring out tea for a Dominican Inquisitor!

"Looking back, I think that that simple, unexpected question of his was the beginning of my feeling *at home* with Catholics. We talked about all sorts of things at tea—it was passing wonderful to hear that anyone in that marvellous white habit could talk about ordinary subjects like trains and scenery, and whether or not you took sugar far more simply and naturally than any clergyman I had ever known, except my own father. We went back to the parlour after, and Father Reginald gave me a little talk about the Three Theological Virtues—I did not know them by that name—and though he found later that I required little instruction on some points, in all fundamentals I was in a state of blank ignorance and prejudice. He saw straight into my soul. After the first ten minutes I was no more afraid.

"I was ill during my first stay at the convent; and he came to see me daily, sometimes twice a day. When I got better one thing struck me forcibly, and did more to intensify my determination to become a Catholic than anything else. It had been arranged that I was

to go home for the last time before my reception. I had pleaded for the delay, incomprehensible as it now seems to me, because I wanted to go to the Protestant communion service once more with my people. It seems to me now that almost any other priest would have said that a would-be convert in such dispositions was not a fitting subject for reception at all. But he *understood*. What he must have felt never appeared. I was impossible; but he was impossibly patient. After all he had taught me, my ignorance and obstinacy must have pained him deeply, but not a sign of it was visible.

"On the day of which I am thinking he had been talking to me of the Authority of the Church. He was sitting some distance away; but presently rose and came towards me, saying gently, but firmly: 'Now, just kneel down and make an Act of Submission to the Church.' Again that wild terror descended on me—for the last time. I cried out: 'I cannot do that yet! I do not want to do anything that will put me out of communion with the Church of England before Christmas!'

"Instead of showing the slightest annoyance or impatience he turned away quietly, and went on with his instruction as if I had not spoken. Somehow that impressed me more than anything he had done, so that I nearly begged to make my submission there and then. He had already won my heart: very soon he was to win my soul. I may say that though I did go home for Christmas, I did not go to church with my family. Twelve days later I was received into the Church by Father Reginald at Woodchester; and the next three months I spent at the convent, where I saw him daily. It was then, and during the long walks he often allowed me to take in his company, that he laid the real foundations of my Catholic life. During those winter walks we talked almost always of mental prayer; and he opened the supernatural world to me.

He spoke of the Purgative, the Illuminative, the Unitive Ways; of St. Teresa, St. Catherine, St. John of the Cross; of the modern mystics—especially of Francis Thomson. He loved the *Hound of Heaven,* then recently published, and would quote long passages from it with a passionate fervour which was moving. We often talked of one of his favourite studies, astronomy; of geology; of botany; of his travels, especially in Italy; of the 'beauties of nature and of Grace.' . . . . It is simply impossible to say what those three months did for the ignorant, almost unwilling convert whom he, by his surpassing skill in the treatment of souls, had brought into the Light.

"I only once, in my long friendship with him, saw him angry. It was when, some three weeks after my reception, something said by a Catholic had greatly angered me; and I exclaimed: 'Really, it is enough to make one give it all up and go back!'

"I never said such a thing again. I had not really meant it, but he made me see the sin of even saying it till I was truly ashamed of myself, and heartily sorry for having offended Father Reginald as well as God.

"As a Confessor it is impossible to speak of him. One felt as if Our Lord Himself were listening and absolving. Well do I remember his expression when I said to him before my first confession: 'When you know how wicked I am, Father, you will never want to speak to me again.' Apart from its sacramental character my first Catholic confession altered my whole comprehension of the Priesthood and the Church.

"For a long time he was, with one exception, the only real friend I had. He was to me Father, Mother —everything I had lost, as well as friend and Director. I was penniless, and living on the charity of the kind nuns at the convent. Father Reginald begged for me, from wealthy friends. The first, but not the last money I received from him, he put into my hand on the day of my reception; when I found him standing beside

me, a little white packet in his hand, as I knelt before the statue of St. Dominic, after High Mass.

"What he was during those early days he has been to me ever since. To him one never had to explain, or recapitulate. He always remembered; always understood. He was always *there*—even if he was thousands of miles away in Grenada. I have known him taken to task by ignorant, presumptuous people for what they considered an error of judgment on his part. He was silent, resenting nothing; though he suffered. . . . He made excuses for everyone; and no one ever made the best of seemingly hopeless people as did Father Reginald. I could write a book on this subject; but what I could not write would fill many books. And I know that the care and love he had for my soul while he was on earth has not ceased—on the contrary.

"'*O Spem Miram . . . .*'"

The following quotations from letters to personal friends show the deep, critical interest which Father Reginald took in the 'Anglican Movement.' He had known all the great converts of the last century and after; from Cardinal Newman to Monsignor Benson; he corresponded occasionally with well-known Anglican clergymen; he kept himself in touch with every latest development of the 'Reunion' activities; and he published many tracts and pamphlets on the subject. Of these perhaps the most remarkable is the earliest: *A Few Plain Thoughts upon the Anglican Movement,* to which we shall return. But in letters he could, and did, say more than it was possible to say in print. Thus:—

"*In re* the Pan-Anglican Congress, it is an interesting gathering of cultured men, with very many *opinions* on religious matters, but no apostolic *authority* to settle things of Faith."

"Many thanks for X's letter. I should like to have it by me. . . . I would give it to an historical expert to examine and pronounce upon. Since the condemnation of Anglican Orders poor X. has been soured and embittered. You see it in his style, and his use of nicknames; so different to —— —— and Spencer Jones; and so different to the way he wrote to the *Cowley Evangelist* when he was in Rome *before* the Condemnation of the Orders. He appears now, from his ultra-Protestant spirit . . . . to think himself competent to judge Popes, Bishops, Romans, and Anglicans all together! But it will not do to assert things without proving them; and in the domain of history it will not do to separate certain alleged facts from all their surroundings and bearings; making no distinction between individuals and institutions, and ignoring fifty other things in connection with them; and then coming to a bald, one-sided, prejudiced, catch-wordy-judgment about them!

"The Old Testament and the New; the History of England, Anglicanism, Protestantism, and what-not, might be treated in this way. De Maistre said that for the last three hundred years history has been a conspiracy against the Truth. No one maintains that Popes in their private capacity are either infallible or impeccable. All we say is that the Church and Pope in their official capacity will not teach us wrong. . . . I draw this out in the second chapter of my *Few Aids to Faith.*

"Therefore, I don't accept X.'s statements as facts. He employs what I call the 'bamboozling method,' like Littledale and other bitter men; and poor souls are dazed. How could it be otherwise when they are not historians or theologians?"

"I felt impelled to write to X. about his letter. . . . . I have addressed him as 'Reverend Father,' just on the principle of calling a man what he calls

himself; and so to set him to read my letter from the first pleasantly. And I have avoided saying one harsh word in it."

"How can those Anglican Sisters and other Anglicans stay where they are? It is a matter of leaving the city of confusion for the City of Peace."

"Heresy has an awfully darkening effect on the mental vision. They use a little candle before the light of the Sun. They don't 'face their facts' fairly."

"What a striking manifesto —— —— made a few months ago (1923), as to the need of recognising the Divine Authority of the Holy See. How he stays, and calls out for Rome, and yet does not submit to it, is a psychological puzzle to me. It was a joy to me to hear that Mr. Mallock was conditionally baptised before his death . . . . he was such a learned thinker and writer twenty or thirty years ago. . . . It seems there have been so many conversions in England lately. I want [five names] to come in. Modernism seems to be rife among them. They seem to believe what they like. This is rather opinion than Faith. Faith is believing on Authority; and the only adequate teaching Authority in religion is the Catholic Church. But Faith is a gift; and if people *will* put impediments to it, the gift is not given."

"The last news of the 'Anglo-Catholics' is, that 16,000 of them at Albert Hall sent a message to the Pope! But Our Lord's words occur to me so often: 'They *say*, and *do not*.' They theorise, wanting to stay where they are. But I always point to facts, staring us in the face. There is the See of Peter, surrounded by 1,600 Bishops, all delivering together their united message to the world. *De facto* this is most certainly the weightiest authority in Christendom. There is nothing to compare with it. First, they have not the See of Peter, the Rock and the Key-

bearer; then they have nothing like 1,600 Bishops all speaking with one voice; add to this they have nothing like 300,000,000 Faithful all believing with united faith in the authority of the Divine Teacher.

"How can Anglicans choose to follow a few leading gentlemen, such as —— ——, ——, and ——, and notably the Editor of the —— ——, in preference to the Church of the Rock and the Keys, with 1,900 years prescription behind; besides the Church being the Mother of the Saints—yes—and of European civilisation too. It always seems to me practically to be a choice of authority. Then the law of nature comes in—the influence of the heart upon the understanding. Yet what examples they have of hundreds of their own body, who have ridden over all that.

"As to recognition of Anglican Orders, they seem to try and content themselves a bit with some of the 'Orthodox' East admitting them. But here again it is a choice of authority. Are a few Eastern Bishops likely to know the history of the West better than the Westerners themselves? Look at the tremendous formality at Rome, all up to the hilt with theologians, historians, Cardinals, and the Holy Father's authoritative word condemning the Orders, after the vast amount of learning and labour expended on the question. What can the Eastern prelates show in comparison with this? Just, it seems, an *ipse dixit*! Where are their long-continued sittings, their experts, and the labours of long months, with learned pros and cons, sifting with the utmost care the evidence, historical and theological, that both parties were producing? How futile it seems to try to hang on to a few Eastern strangers, when the whole Authority of the West, the Roman Church, which was the Mother of the Church of England; which created the See of Canterbury and governed the English hierarchy for about 900 years from Augustine to Pole, is there in full possession of her science and authority together; and sit-

ing in solemn judgment on Anglican Orders, after such long, exhaustive considerations, condemns them. 'To whom shall we turn,' they might, should, and could say, 'if we turn away from thee?'"

(1925)

"The 'Orthodox Greeks' at Westminster Abbey was a stirring event, no doubt! Yet it seems like 'accidental externals' without the 'grand essential.' How strange to sop themselves so!"

(Feb. 1926)

"I shall keep my eye on —— ——, and all these remarkable Anglican doings. He will no doubt feel greatly the death of Cardinal Mercier. . . . It is a mystery to me how he can stay where he is. Leo XIII sent three letters to our Anglican friends: 1. The Unity of the Church; 2, *Ad Anglos;* 3. The Condemnation of Anglican Orders, *now thirty years ago.* These are the very clear utterances of the Holy See on the Anglican position. What is the good of asking, or expecting Rome to change her mind about them? There are her words: yet —— —— seems to fancy Rome might reconsider these very serious matters about which she has spoken so clearly. It is the private spirit against the Divine Authority."

"I still keep a watch on the Anglican movement," he writes to another friend in 1917, "and pray daily for its leaders."

Father Reginald took a keen interest in the attempts made by the Anglican leaders to interest foreign ecclesiastics on their behalf, such as the movement usually referred to as the "Malines Conversations." Of a much earlier event he wrote (1896):—

"I am delighted to see that the *Revue Anglo-Romaine* has come to an end; and that the French writers have submitted themselves entirely to the En-

cyclical on Unity, and the Bull condemning Anglican Orders. These are events in the history of the Church in England, and will help our French and Roman brethren to understand the state of things in England as well as we do ourselves. . . . . Have you read the Holy Father's Encyclical on the *Unity of the Church?* It will last, I should think, till the end of the world, and seems to be a finisher to the Anglican controversy."

While heartily hating heresy, Father Reginald had nothing but sympathy—affection would hardly be too strong a term—for those outside the Fold. He writes (1916) to one of his children who had many friends among the Anglican clergy :—

"I admire your apostolate among the Parsons. I like Parsons, because, first, they are gentlemen! So many of them want us—tend to us—and love to meet us. How gladly would I come and see your friends, were I in England. . . . I will be sure to remember X."

But he saw clearly the root of the matter. In 1924 he writes :—

"I take it all the Anglican bitterness against the Church of the Rock and the Keys to be a combination of ignorance and prejudice; and the reason why the Gift of Faith is not given to so many of them is that they keep *impedimenta* to the Gift within them. God acts by law: He gives not His gifts to men as long as they keep obstructions to them in their souls; just as He does not give fruit to the tree till the tree is fitted to receive it."

And he would repeat with a smile his favourite quotation from Newman on the Anglican question: *"They rule that it is so."*

Chapter V

"DEAR HUGH"

The story of the conversion of Father Reginald's best-loved spiritual child has already been told by Monsignor Benson himself. But Father Reginald has, happily, left us his own account of it. It will be remembered that at the time of his reception, "Father Benson" was a well-known missioner of the Community of the Resurrection, Mirfield. The "convert priest" referred to by the narrator was on the point of becoming a Dominican himself. Father David Richards received the white habit on Christmas Eve, 1903; and died in Mexico a few years later.

"Living on the staff of the Dominican Fathers at Woodchester in the West of England in the early years of the century, a convert priest asked me if I would take in hand an Anglican gentleman in view to his reception into the Church, for some reason of his own giving no name. I assented with readiness and pleasure, always being full of interest in those coming over to Holy Mother Church, and having followed up the Anglican movement in its later developments of the last fifty years and more, when Dr. Frederick George Lee was such a moving spirit in the project of 'Reunion with Rome.'

"A little later the priest said that his friend was a man of some distinction by birth and name, leaving me for the rest still in the dark. But as the time drew near he divulged the secret, and said that I had to take in hand the son of an Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury. Needless to say, I was delighted at the

prospect, having known Archbishop Benson so well by name and reputation. I remember his being impressed with the thought of the Holy See, and its 1,200 Bishops. I can recall his choosing the words from our Missal, *Mundet et Muniat,* and sending them round his Diocese as a New Year's message. Then, at the very time just after the condemnation of Anglican Orders, came his tragic death, so suddenly, on his knees in Mr. Gladstone's church at Hawarden.

"The day was fixed, and Hugh Benson, as he was commonly called, arrived at Woodchester. Well do I remember going down the hill to meet him,[1] knowing so well the cases of clergy converts from Anglicanism —the loss of friends and position, the sorrow to dear relatives, and the terrific wrench. Here was an Eton and a Cambridge man, and the son of an Archbishop. The step would make a stir—and so it did.

"Coming to the Priory I said to him: 'We live here far from the madding crowd.' He came in—he was very quiet, and humble as a child. Seeing first to his little needs, as a guest, I then showed him about, that he might feel at home—and took him to the church, where he knelt devoutly. A man of England's best education, and a man of special culture, I felt it best to leave him well to himself—that he might be in quiet retreat—for he had lived very actively as an Anglican clergyman—preaching, hearing confessions, and studying our Catholic theology. My feeling

[1] Monsignor Benson's verbal description of the profound impression made upon him by the first sight of Father Reginald was deeply touching. He was greatly moved by the courtesy of this venerable Religious, who came to meet him as he descended from the Stroud omnibus. He was accompanied by a lay-brother to carry the visitor's luggage. "But," as Father Reginald used to say, "Hugh preferred to carry it himself!" Father Reginald's private correspondence at this time was full of his admiration at the extreme *simplicity* and humility of his illustrious convert. "He was so quiet when he was here," he used to say later, "and look at him now! One of the greatest preachers in England!"

was that I would not in any way push him on, but leave him to act and ask for himself. I gave him a short treatise on Faith, a leaf with little acts of Faith, Hope, Charity, Contrition, and offering to God, and a Penny Catechism, begging him to study them, and ask whatever questions he might wish.

"We took long walks together, in the beautiful Cotswold Hill scenery, and so had good opportunities of talking things over. I remember asking him what he and his friends felt when conversions to Rome were reported in the papers? 'We hated it,' he said. 'Have you any difficulty about the doctrine of indulgences?' I asked. 'The name is very misleading to people in English *parlance*. It sounds as though we might indulge ourselves.' In the Church's language it only means the commutation of a sentence, from higher penalties for sin, to something lower—and Evangelical Protestants admit very large indulgences when they say: 'Trust to Christ, and sins are done away!' But such a well-read, sensible man had no particular difficulties this way. Take the Church as the Divine Teacher, and the teaching is guaranteed by her. We may have difficulties in Faith, because God is so great and we are so little. Difficulties are not doubts. As Newman said: 'Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt.'

"Now, one day Hugh came to me, and said: 'Father, will you look at something I have written out?' This was just what I wanted. I wanted him to take the step. The Act of Faith is between the soul and God. It is God speaking, and the soul submitting. I took his paper, a long one, type-written.[2] How impressed I was! What light, what learning

[2] They were walking along the walled road leading from the Priory to the Franciscan convent. Father Reginald loved to point out the exact spot where "Hugh" had handed him the paper, which he took back to the Priory to read carefully.

were here! He had drawn out the workings of his own soul, from Anglicanism to Rome.

"I took the paper to him, and said: 'There is only one thing for you to do now, and that is, to kiss St. Peter's Chair.' This settled him. The day and hour were fixed—September 11th, 1903. He made his profession of faith, of hope, and of love, in the Chapter-Room, and knelt down as a child for confession. As he had indubitable evidence for the validity of his Anglican baptism, I did not re-baptise him, but just gave the absolution.

"He rose. I gave him the *pax,* and said to him: 'I shall have to call you in future my dear Hugh.' 'I hope you will, Father," was his reply. And he went to the Church. The day following he made his first Communion. He stayed over the Sunday, and on Monday he left for the north [Talacre, N. Wales] to stay with a priest friend, then acting as Chaplain to a Catholic household.

"Among many things, he spoke of his future vocation, and even hinted that he might undertake a secular life. 'No, no,' I said—'don't think of this—you must be a Priest, certainly.' Yes, he was made for this! He stayed for a short time with the Benedictines, at Erdington, where he enjoyed the kindest welcome. Then he returned to his mother's house, finishing the last pages of his first Catholic book—'By What Authority.'[3] On All Souls' Day he left England for Rome, in view of studying for the Priesthood. Within the first year of his Catholic life he was ordained Priest in Rome [June 13th, 1904], and soon after returned again to England.

"He paid another visit to Woodchester then—he was still shy, and very humble. In vain I asked him to give us a sermon in the church on Sunday. But he

[3] "He was working for this at Woodchester, and I introduced him to Bishop Milner's 'Letters to a Prebendary,' which deals in such a masterly way with Elizabethan history."

would not. We little suspected all that was in him. One of his early works was published: *'A City Set on a Hill.'* This is a somewhat fuller statement of the paper he gave me to read before his reception. It is, as I always feel, a masterpiece of religious controversy, drawing out the requirements of the Church's life and efficiency: showing that Rome has them, and Anglicans not.

"But he soon found his place and work, and devoted his life and talents to the great benefit of the Church in England, and the winning of souls to God. His was truly the apostolic spirit. He lived for God and souls. His labours, as we all know, were immense; and his position in the Church in England soon became unique.

"One day he allowed himself a little holiday with me. I had never been inside Lambeth Palace, although so often seeing it from the outside. Of course this historic building had been his home when his father was Archbishop; and it had been the home of the Archbishops of Canterbury in pre-Reformation as well as post-Reformation days: in the days of Warham and Pole and before them. Therefore Hugh Benson had an easy *entrée* there. We arranged the day, and on arriving I felt it best to let him enter the familiar portals, to see how things might be. The Archbishop (Davidson) was away; but strangely enough, he found his own mother a guest at the palace, which had been her own home.[4]

[4] The butler, Archbishop Benson's old servant, who opened the outer door to the two ecclesiastics and a friend who accompanied him, exclaimed, beaming with delight: "Mr. Hugh, sir, do you know your mother is here?" He had not known it—she had come down to take a class for women which she had founded and never given up—and while he went to find her the butler enjoyed himself mightily by explaining to the horrified Father Reginald how "Mr. Hugh" loved to play football along a certain historic corridor, hung with suits of armour and valued pictures, in company with his brother and younger sister. "Sometimes their

"He came back, saying how things were, and took me in. His mother knew me by name, as the one who had given a helping hand to her dear son, in his change of faith. He took her to me, and when shaking hands she looked at me and said: 'I don't forget September 11th'—that was the day of his reception at Woodchester. We had a very pleasant time there, and I saw the splendid old Catholic Early English work of the historic Chapel, where Matthew Parker lies buried.

"A little over a year ago he sent me his '*Confessions of a Convert,*'[5] with an affectionate letter saying that he had been 'bold enough to dedicate it to me without leave.' The dedication is most tenderly expressed, as to the one 'whose hand unlocked for me the gate of the City of God, and led me in.' This had reference to his book, *A City Set on a Hill,* and the paper he had put into my hand before his reception. I sent him in return a book of mine, *A Spiritual Retreat;* feeling it would help him in his quiet hours, which brought me another most kind epistle from him.

"How suddenly his death came upon us! It seems to leave a blank in my life, as it does indeed in the Church in England. His loss is irreparable. I begged him in writing to think of the 'long' as well as the 'strong' pull. But it was as though he *must* go on. Perpetually preaching, perpetually writing, and with all the glow of his ardent mind and heart—it was bound to bear down his *physique,* which was not of

father caught them at it!" he added, darkly. With what charm Mrs. Benson received Father Reginald and how delightfully and gaily she talked to him those who knew her will guess. She, on her part, was struck by his gentle dignity, and stately, old-fashioned courtesy; as well as by his sense of humour. Her son sat by, beaming with happiness; occasionally joining in a conversation carried on for the greater part by his mother and Father Reginald. Miss Tait was also present on this occasion. The visit took place on the day *The Necromancers* was published.

[5] Father Reginald wrote a few years before his death that he ranked this book next to Newman's *Apologia.*

the robust type. As the *Daily Telegraph* lately said: 'He lived a saintly life. Nothing could restrain him from the ardours of a missionary campaign, which was conducted on both sides of the Atlantic. For several years past it had been clear that he was wearing himself out. But it was also clear that he was a man whose life must flame, not flicker, to its close.' "[6]

Father Reginald sent this article, with a letter, to Mrs. Benson, who wrote:—

"Your letter has been a very real joy to me, and I value more than I can say the 'memento of his and your sweet friendship.' How well I remember our meeting at Lambeth, and all that it meant in that memory of September, 1903; and how he wrote of you to me then, and all he said—how tenderly you touch it all into life.

"I always knew he wished to die so. We had often discussed it, and I had disagreed with that plan of life, as not being obedient enough or reverent enough to the whole of God's making—to body as well as to soul; but he clung to it always—a strenuous, almost impossible life, followed by a swift passing—and God has given him his heart's desire—and God's will be done. That is one's only haven, safe from all the misery of secondary causes.

"I do trust your own life is going sweetly, powerfully along. I like the picture of the 'silver-headed missionary Father,' and the '*aliquid adolescentis*' which I always recognise in my memory of you.

"I wish very much we could meet again. If ever such a possibility arose you would not forget me, I am sure.

"Your words about all his work for the Church of England, and the Catholic world, go to my heart."

[6] Published by request in the *Catholic News* of Trinidad, after the death of Monsignor Benson in October, 1914. Reprinted in *Rosary*.

This "kind and tender letter," as he described it to a correspondent, touched Father Reginald deeply; its writer was continually in his prayers. Her last letter to him, dated All Saints' Day, 1917, may be quoted in part here:—

"Your letter written on September 18th has been a great delight to me. It is delightful to think of your tender words about the Benson family. Four of them are now in Paradise—both my dear girls—my eldest, Martin—Hugh—and their Father. So Arthur and Fred are the only ones left here. Arthur, I am sorry to say, is suffering just now from bad sleeplessness and depression, and is in a Rest-Cure. The doctors are quite confident of recovery, but we must all have patience.

"It was so good of you to send your portrait. How well I remember you! It is wonderful to hear of your activity—'climbing mountains and crossing rivers'—and at 75! I am 76, and full of infirmities, though going well on the whole. . . . The war atmosphere is most depressing. . . . .

"I do so value your photograph. Let me say it again. It looks at me as I write with such a dear look of peace and strength—just the very qualities one longs for so just now.

"Let me wish you every good and perfect wish and hope and blessing."

"So sorry was I to hear of Mrs. Benson's death," writes Father Reginald to a friend in 1921. "How well I remember her and the rest when we visited Lambeth with R.H.B." Nor was Mrs. Benson the only member of the family with whom he corresponded. In 1920 he addressed a letter to Mr. A. C. Benson, in whose personality and work he had always been

greatly interested, about a book recently published by that famous writer; and received the following reply :—

"It is very good of you to write to me so kindly about my book, and your letter has given me much pleasure. I remember my mother telling me about your visit, and what delight it gave her; and I know too all you did for my brother Hugh at the great turning-point of his life. What you say of my mother gives me great joy.

"I shall read your book with the deepest interest, and the more so as I have been spending many weeks with a Catholic friend, who has told me much of the inner life of Catholics. Your words about Oxford bring back to me many figures familiar to me in books and through my father's words. He would have been just 90 if he had lived until now. I am very glad to hear of your health and strength, and your enjoyment of nature.

"I am back at Cambridge after long illness and long absence, and I can do very little at present. Moreover I am suffering from great depression of mind—partly physical, but even more from the thought of the many things I have done amiss or have left undone in a very self-willed life. I must not trouble you about all this, but I should be grateful for a friendly thought and a prayer, for my need of help is great."

The kind of reply made by Father Reginald to this touching letter can easily be guessed, and two months later Mr. Benson wrote again :—

"I write to thank you for your kind and beautiful letter, and for your tractate, which I have read with great interest.

"You are quite right about *authority*, and my sentence[7] is a very faulty one. I was thinking of tyranny,

[7] Evidently in the book previously mentioned.

when the mind that is governed does not concur in its inmost depths with the power that coerces it.

"The weakness of natural religion is, I think, that it is a guide but not a guardian. It allows the wilful and perverse to indulge their fancies, and lends no discipline to the spirit. What you say on p. 3 about the spirit of man is full of insight. Just now I am feeling the *terrible* side of life very acutely. My long illness has deprived me of hopefulness and activity, and I feel very much in the dark about it all.

"I shall be grateful if you will bear me in mind. I am deeply in need of strength and courage. But I must not trouble you about my needs and failures!"

The correspondence was evidently continued on these lines. After his manner Father Reginald had no doubt used figures and images to enforce the principles which he laid down; for the last letter preserved from Mr. Benson, written in May, 1921, runs as follows:—

"Thank you for your kind letter. I do indeed see your point—that the handkerchief, so to speak, cannot be without a *hem;* and that is, no doubt, the weakness of natural religion.

"I shall try to see B ——'s book; but I don't need to be convinced as to the necessity of some *forma.* But the question is: how to arrive at it? One cannot create it from within; and in these dark days it is withheld from me.

"Thank you for all your kind thoughts. I know that you will bear me in mind."

The special interest which Father Reginald took in this beautiful soul so near the Kingdom of God was of course chiefly due to the deep and sincere affection which had existed between himself and his well-loved

spiritual son. To see these two together, on the rare occasions of their meeting, was delightful. The old priest really gloried in the triumphs of the younger as preacher and writer, though he very frequently warned him of the danger he ran in overstraining heart, nerves, and voice. His letters to a personal friend of Monsignor Benson are full of references to this; and are eminently quotable did space permit. "Give Father Reginald my deepest love and gratitude, and explain I'm nearly beside myself with bothers of all sorts," Monsignor Benson wrote in reply to one such expostulation; to which Father Reginald replied: "I'm so sorry to see R.H.B. has 'bothers of all sorts.' That is more than I have." He had looked forward to seeing very high honours conferred on his favourite convert; and was delighted when he was made a *Monsignore*.

"How does he look in his purple?" he asked of one who had just heard Monsignor Benson preach in London; adding wistfully: "I should so like to see him in it, dear man!" Curiously enough, he never did hear Monsignor Benson preach; nor, to their mutual regret, was he ever able to visit him at Hare Street; though he eagerly questioned those more fortunate; and took pleasure in hearing the smallest details as to that wonderful house and its occupants. He was also deeply interested in Monsignor Benson's great work at Cambridge, especially among the undergraduates. "I consider R.H.B. was a genius," he wrote shortly after his friend's death; "having learnt long ago that 'the essence of genius is *intuition*.'"

Ten years earlier he had written to an old and influential correspondent :—

"Father Benson is doing exceedingly well at Cambridge, and giving courses of sermons there. His preaching, I hear, is most effective. If you so will, suggest him to the Canon, in case any *sermon d'occasion* were needed—think it over. I am so interested in Benson, as being my own convert, that I want to bring out his powers as a preacher, for I know they are so great, and his personality is something special, and his name so known. . . . . We want men of mark. We've nothing like we had, now the good old converts have gone. Benson is a rising man. God bless him, and make him a star in England for many a year to come."

But this was not to be. Had the younger outlived the elder, what a wonderful Life of Father Reginald might have been written by his "Dear Hugh." [8]

[8] The letters in this chapter from Mrs. Benson and Mr. Arthur C. Benson are published by special permission of Mr. E. F. Benson.

Chapter VI

LETTERS (I)

On the principle that more may be learnt about a man's true self by an hour's intimate conversation with him than by the descriptions of any of his friends, this and the following chapter have been dedicated entirely to quotations from Father Reginald's enormous correspondence.

The quotations in the present chapter are taken from the earlier part of a correspondence which extended over forty-three years. They were written to a lady whose vocation for Religion was fostered, if not formed, by this zealous lover of souls; and show the heart and mind of the writer more perfectly than any others which it has been the great privilege of those concerned in the compilation of this book to examine. And though it may perhaps be urged that all Father Reginald could say on certain matters he could and did say in his many published works, the more his correspondence is studied, the clearer it becomes that in his letters of spiritual direction his inmost self is revealed. In every one of the sequence here quoted there is some gem worth preserving; as indeed is the case with all the rest of his letters, some scattered fragments of which appear in Ch. VII. In writing to his spiritual children there was always the personal touch, naturally wanting in a deep theological work, or a printed tractate. He, writing with no thought of publication, "let himself go," as he would have said, more freely and conversationally than when writing a book.

Yet "the doctrine" is always the same; adapted in each case to the needs of his correspondent.

The number of these was indeed legion. It is matter for wonder how he found time, in addition to his hard work as a Religious and his frequent holding of office, together with his constant literary work, to "keep in touch" with old friends and new; with Religious and seculars, as well as with his own family, and a certain number of souls outside the Church. Yet he did so; and the mass of correspondence so generously offered for publication in this insufficient work would prove it, though what has been preserved can be but a small fraction of the whole.

The first letter of those now to be quoted is dated 1883.[1]

"It is a pleasure to me to see your excellent aspirations, and be sure I will always reckon you among my children, and be happy to assist you wherever you may be. But in the work of perfection (as you will have learnt from the book)[2] God himself is the *Agens Principale*. The Divine Spirit is the true Guide of souls, from Whom we receive our internal light and guidance, and constant fresh supplies of love. *Caritas*, therefore, is to be regarded as the very working of God Himself within the loving soul; the soul responding and concurring with Him. This is the sweet mutual love: God loving the soul, and the soul loving God; God giving Himself to the soul, and the soul

[1] Father Reginald's letters, unless carefully preserved in chronological order, and dated by the recipient, are difficult to classify, owing to a curious habit he had of frequently omitting the year in dating them. His later letters however are usually correctly dated.

[2] Wherever in these letters "the book" is mentioned, the reference is to *The Perfection of Man by Charity*.

giving itself to God; God abiding in the soul, and the soul abiding in God; God working in the soul, the soul working with God; God *enjoying* Himself in the soul, the soul enjoying itself in God. All this is expressed in the one sweet word *CARITAS*. This is why that word speaks our ALL; and as long as we live this love may go on *growing* within us, spreading its virtue into our powers, and the operations of our life; accommodating itself to whatever comes, action or suffering: '*valens ad omnia, et omnibus prævalens,*' as Richard of St. Victor said some 700 years ago. For it is the matter of the formation of a habit, and a habit grows by the repetition of its acts; and as nothing hinders a soul from constantly acting *ex principio Caritatis* through life, so accordingly through life, day by day and hour by hour, the repetition goes on, and the habit grows.

"When it is developed to a fair extent it gets a fair hold on the soul, mind, and heart together; and the thoughts and affections easily go to God, and of course the operations follow: *quia operatio sequitur esse,* as philosophers teach; so that if the *esse,* or the being becomes loving, the operations become loving too. Then the developed habit becomes itself the spring or principle of new operations, which flow from the formed habit promptly, easily, and sweetly; just as from the formal musician musical operations flow promptly, easily, and sweetly. You have learnt this, have you not? But I never tire of the beautiful doctrine.

"Don't forget, my dear Child, that the sweet *Caritas Dei* needs through life her two inseparable attendants, by which she accomplishes the soul's perfection, namely Prayer and Mortification. . . . . By Prayer, always understand mental, in its different grades of affective acts and operations. . . . . By Mortification understand the 'putting down of the Old Man,' especially by whatever means Divine Providence

Itself provides. . . . . And although the natural man *does* feel such mortifications, remember that the Divine Lover *at once* allows the loving soul a sweet counterpart to these pains, by the inner link of love; so that the soul by saying: *Caritas est hic* in the midst of her mortifications at once finds the element of sweetness; so that *Caritas* becomes a *sustaining*, as well as a *moving* principle; sustaining the soul to suffer, and moving it to act. . . .

"I would certainly recommend you a good deal of the *transcending* element in regard to reflections on yourself, your trials, or the miseries of poor nature. Don't forget the law: repetition induces habit. Don't form imperfect habits, that so interfere with the *one habit*. Henry Suso says that the soul must 'habitually reject all that is not the *one thing*.' If trials press, think again of the sentence which the same holy man gives us from the *Eternal Wisdom*: This is the Game of Love.' And again, one more of his charming sentences: 'Those complain of the bitterness of the rind who have not found the sweetness of the kernel.' . . .

"Love of course must be (as you know) affective and effective. Love affective corresponds to *Caritas contemplativa;* and love effective to *Caritas activa*. Therefore, in prayer . . . . in the hidden, active, or suffering life, say equally: *Caritas est hic*. Your progress is *not* in the hidden, *not* in the active; *not* in the *suffering*, but *in the love* that animates them each. *Tene eam, ne dimittas, quia ipsa est vita tua.*"

"Stability, if you please, not instability. The Divine Lover wants His lovers to be constant and stable. It will not do to build up and then pull down; to plant and to uproot. The whole work is the formation of a habit; the attainment of a fixed quality or disposition within:—*viz.*, the abiding permanent *impression* in the soul of Divine Love, which comes by consistent repetition of act. . . . . Why do you com-

plain of not being loved, or of being in the way? or of wishing to end life, etc.? 'Are you yet without understanding'? Are you still an infant, unable to walk? Are you pining for 'perishable love,' and not rather glad to be free from things so capable of leading you astray? . . . . This is not the way to form the 'habit of habits.' Stability of purpose, constancy of repetition is needed. I fear the devout sex have much to be on their guard against this rock of instability. . . . . They want to be reading this, then that, then another, whereas, when once the principles are grasped, they ought rather to give up this multiplicity of reading, and take in hand the work as their one project; transfer the principles from the books to their own souls, and make spiritual life a stern reality. St. Bernard lamented the same sort of thing; remarking that the beautiful spiritual form was found in books, but not in souls: *in libris, sed non in viris*. . . . .

"Now, my dear Child, have you not heard that the Good Shepherd carries the rod and the staff? . . . . I have generally, if not always, offered you the staff to help you on. Now you see you have the rod. But if you are wise, you must be comforted with both, each as they are wanted."

"How should we be able to develop courage, fidelity, constancy, strong, ardent, valiant love, if all went in the way we ourselves willed?

"Don't you remember the answer given to St. Teresa, when she asked how Our Lord permitted so many servants of His to be without the favours she had? 'Serve Me, and do not trouble thyself about other things.' . . . . Listen to Seneca, speaking from the light of wisdom which even he had:

> 'Let us purify our souls: otherwise we shall be *slaves to accidents*: either craving or fearing. No man can be happy that is not free and fearless; and

no man can be so but he that by Wisdom has got the better of accidents.'

"What sublime teaching! When shall we be up to the standard even of Seneca? And the shortest way to this is ever to cling to *Caritas sola et plena.*"

"'Trade till I come,' is what Our Lord said in the parable of the servants to whom the pounds were given. . . . . Each year comes to you as a *ship* to be laden with goods. Trade well. Store your ship with good things. *Caritas* is the gold; and there is nothing like gold for trading successfully. Hence Our Lord says in the Apocalypse: 'I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.' (Apoc. iii, 18). We are to *buy* it—that is, if we want the higher love of God we must give in exchange for it the lower love of self."

"If I did not know that *Veritas* had engaged you I should be much more cautious of my . . . . words to you. But my assurance is that your loving nature is tending to the 'One Love,' and renouncing other loves for His sake. Do not wonder, therefore, at your solitary sort of life, or at feeling sometimes a certain 'solitude of heart.' Is it not like the Divine Lover, to lead the loving soul into solitude and there speak to her? Has He not spoken to you all the more since you have been more alone, and less with others? And have you never noticed that when you seem to be more tried than usual, especially in the 'affective' nature, that then some of the best lights of your life have descended upon you? . . . .

"Your questions are not those of a baby: and so I will not treat them in a childish way, but answer them with the weight they deserve. 'Am I right in trusting that if I plunge in, Our Lord will look after me, and not let me sink?' Your allusion here to St. Peter on the waters is very nice, and you may well speak to Our Lord about it. I think the decision of the matter

must rest upon the strength of your *attraction.* Have you attractions to the —— convent on the one side, and —— on the other? If so, you could hardly trust yourself to plunge in where swimming would be very difficult, but would naturally enter where it is feasible. But if you feel an unusually strong attraction, and as it were, insuperable, to a particular convent, as though the very happiness of your spirit were bound up with being there; and if the nuns there, on their part, open a 'door of hope' to you, and almost constrain you; and if on the other hand to the other convent *none* of these things lend themselves, then I do believe that you may . . . . make the plunge, looking to the Beloved to help you as St. Peter did (St. Matt. xiv, 28); and trusting that if He *draws* so strongly, He wills you to confide in Him; allowing also for the powers of nature . . . . that a calm and strong and loving spirit will rebound upon the body; enabling you to do what the Beloved may wish.

"Try, dearest Child, to keep mind and heart both well. Spiritual science for the mind; and sweet charity for the heart; both gradually developing as *habits* of the soul. And keep it steadily in view to be a true lover, living and working with the Beloved. . . . . Then from science turn to prayer, and so the great powers of the soul find their satisfaction even here below. Then, what hinders the spirit from giving itself to the works of active life? It moves easily to them from the contemplative principle; as the hands of a watch move from the spring."

"You have to be very grateful to the Divine Lover for having put you well on the track of love. You have by nature a loving heart, and we may guess that the very sharp trials to your affections which you have had to experience in your own home, have been allowed by the sweet Providence of the Beloved, to aid

in turning you wholly to Himself : that your heart may be given to Him in place of creatures.

" Then add to this, the way in which He led you first to Fr. ——, then to —— where you found in a sort of accidental way, the means to ' precipitate,' so to say, the love that had already been cultivated in your heart, and which, I doubt not, will tell so considerably in your future life.

" I think you have grasped the great principle sufficiently well, by this time, to be able to feel an assurance that it will serve you, and keep you strong and true, in whatever other vicissitudes the Beloved may wish to lead you with Himself. For, do not forget, we have not only love for the filling of our hearts : but we have the Beloved too . . . .

" It is this wish for love and the Beloved that moves a soul to ' transcend ' her own miseries. She doesn't want to have as much as a single ' image ' shading over her spirit, for these images are ' downdrawing,' to use Fr. Baker's word : they darken, distract and depress the soul in the way of love. On the other hand love itself is a purifying principle : if therefore miseries have been contracted why not, instead of shading the spirit by looking at them, and so reviving their images within us, turn to the Beloved by a vigorous act of love : ' scorning to cast a glance at creatures that cannot be considered without being some tincture in the soul ' ?

" Transcension, then (as you ask its definition), signifies a passing or a leaping over our miseries, instead of stopping to look at, discuss, or even confess them, knowing they are not necessary matters of confession ; and that love itself has the virtue of erasing them from the soul. The practice of Transcension proceeds on the principle that we are creatures of habit ; that our acts make our habits ; and that, therefore, as we have to form the right habits, we must take care to put the corresponding acts. That among all the habits, Divine

Love is the first and foremost to be formed; and consequently our acts must be as far as possible on the continued track of love. That our miseries tend to make us sad and depressed . . . . causing a kind of shade over the bright life of love within. Further, that the *management* of our miseries may be two-fold: . . . . the direct, by directly looking at and discussing them; the indirect, by looking at God and 'drowning' the miseries in the sweet waters of His Love. And the conclusion of this little philosophy is, that to loving souls 'transcension' is a better and quieter way of progress to the Beloved than the 'direct' method of managing miseries; and that, as our progress is our main work, we have just to do what helps us best to do it.

"If a soul told me that in her case she found examen and confession of miseries better helped her on to God, I would tell her to use it. What helps us most we take. What hinders us we avoid. There must be perfect liberty of spirit in these things. But if a soul said Transcension didn't help her, my conclusion would be that she wasn't sufficiently loving. . . . . If you wanted to succeed in transcending, I would say: 'Father, I have no fault of the will since my last confession, and no particular matter of accusation, if you will give me your Blessing and let me go to Holy Communion.' But use your liberty of spirit; confess or transcend as you may feel will help you most to progress. Both are means, but progress is the work."

"If He is the *Only good,* He must be our only Love; for what can be loved but Good? . . . . This brings the soul into the most desirable *simplicity,* or oneness . . . of which Gertrude More writes so sweetly . . . .

"Hold yourself, therefore, calmly before Him, that He may pour upon you. How can He treat us and heal us and fashion us if we do not keep still before

Him? Do not be wincing too much. He knows what He is about. His very blows are skilful, if we keep quiet before Him. . . . .

"Well, then, dearest Child, will you not get your bruises healed by keeping under the flowings of the Fountain. . . . See how then bruises will gradually disappear; and how the great capacities of the soul will fill, and what a sweet bargain it will be to give all for love!"

"If He wants you to work in this place or that, with these tools or those, leave Him to arrange; these things are accidental. Don't cleave to particular instruments because you like the feel of them, as children might do. They are to be used *in ordine ad finem*. As soon, then, as the Master bids you change place or instrument, what can you say? *Magister dicit*. The Master saith. That is enough. If a soul cling to its instrument then, it would be out of order to its end. Then 'the lover is free; he is not held' (*Imit.* iii, 5); and the little bird to fly up must not be tied even by a thread.

"So, dearest Child, learn to be pretty independent of instruments . . . . and as you form yourself this way you will find stability developing; for we are not labouring for the good things of God, but for the God of good things; we are not labouring for the sake of the shell, but for the sake of the kernel. The convent, and the rules and exercises of Religion are good shells, but without a good kernel inside they are not overmuch. But a good kernel is sweet to the Master, and He can well afford to cast the shell aside. . . . . I remember what St. Francis of Sales said, that the prick of a pin with more love in it is better than martyrdom with less love. So more love here or there in the world is better than less love in Religion.

"These are the thoughts you must have at the time of transition."

"I think when you get into the convent you will feel as Cardinal Newman felt on entering the Church, that it was 'like coming into port after a rough sea.' Truly you have been tossed about! How strange, too, that . . . . you should have been so roughly handled. You must look to the Divine Lamb Himself, and love to have been a little conjoined to Him. . . . .

"So, after all your trials, dear Child, you are brought to the sweet life of Love. It is well to have enlarged your mind, I think, in regard to the views of 'action' in union with 'contemplation.' Try to be intimately convinced that the same Love gets into the two operations. If perfection were in contemplation, I would not want action. Who would want it? But how would the world or the Church go on? But when it is known that perfection is in *Love,* then give me contemplation as before, and my love shall get into it; and give me action, and my love shall be in that too: and give me suffering, and love is there also. Give me office and position, and the sweet principle energises there: give me hidden life, and it is no less there: give me a music-lesson or a room to sweep, and my inmost life is with me. *Caritas est hic.*"

"I recommend you, make up your mind for the imperfection of externals wherever you may be in this life; and in whatsoever state you be. Doubtless they are in ——, in ——, and in all other convents in the world. . . . . Understand also that the 'ideal' is so far above the 'real.' When you nail yourself to a convent your ideal goes back to a sweet, peaceful life, under the shadow of a monastic church, with a few kindred souls, and quiet work for the good of religion and the poor. Had you that, or something of it (for here too the ideal would far surpass the real) you would then make your ideal convent . . . . elsewhere, and your poor little heart would not rest. You would feel you *must* have the convent in view; then when you got

to it the real is still far short, and the heart suffers and rebounds back again. . . . .

"When mental prayer comes, He entertains us in quiet and sweetness with himself: that is, if we keep true to His principle. . . . . *Caritas,* in the midst of the dark externals. After a lapse of time, keeping true to His principle, making many and forced acts, He begins to appear in His own perfect light to the soul; and then begins the sweet state of Contemplation; which however is not lasting, for the Beloved 'allows Himself to be found, but not detained,' as though He said: 'I allow you to have Me a little, but if you want Me more you will have to "run after Me in the odour of My ointments"; that is, give yourself with great alacrity to the exercise of Christian virtue, according to your state; and in your heart (*ex animo*) giving up all to follow Me.'

"So, dearest Child, the work is *lifelong.* Don't expect to get this sweetness in your state for a considerable time yet, though you may get just touches of it, now and then, in mental prayer. . . . . Just discipline your mind a little from ideals to reals . . . . and as far as any influence you may have, direct or indirect, with your associates in Religion, help one another in the *tendency* to perfection, by the development of the Higher Love; and have the same work in hand, gently and prudently, in dealing with the children and other souls with whom you may be brought in contact as life goes on; for thus you will help, in your own sphere, to establish the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men."

"[In meditation] reflections are but meant to stir the heart and lead to God. Therefore, if you can stir at once, and get to Him, leave the reflections behind, as you would the steps of a ladder that have served their purpose. Hence the saying of St. Peter of Alcantara: *'Adepta fine, cessant jam media'*—the end being at-

tained, the means now cease. The end is the Divine Presence; the means are our reflections.

"If sometimes you want a little spiritual recreation, and the points please you, you may recreate by your enjoyment of them for the time. But true lovers are rather impatient, so to say, to be with the Beloved; and so they soon reduce the points to the great reality, and find their rest and enjoyment there. Accordingly . . . . conversing with the Beloved, and then being the recipient of His light and love . . . . is the very essence of mental prayer; and considerations are supposed to be steps leading thereto. But do not expect to be always equal in mental prayer. We have different seasons in our souls, as St. Francis of Sales says. . . . . If, however, you feel you are doing nothing in Prayer, I would have recourse to the 'Acts.' If they don't work well (though they may be *forced*) then open the *Imitation* or other book for considerations.

"In the Office and vocal prayer you must not be surprised at distractions. See Hilton's very splendid chapter on this, near the end of the *Scale* [*of Perfection*], where he speaks of the body as the *trumpet* of the soul; and mouth and heart in full accord together."

"In the Office of St. Stephen, which we said to-day, I was the Lector at Matins, and was struck, as I read the concluding words about the Saint, in the second Nocturn: *'Caritatem pro armis habebat, et per ipsam ubique vincebat'*—he had *Caritas* for his arms of defence, and by it he always conquered. I was sitting next to Father Bertrand [Wilberforce], and as I returned to my place he looked at me with a smile, and said: *'Caritatem.'* Of course I knew what he meant, and returned the smile. The sentence is so sweetly expressed, and comes from St. Fulgentius. . . .

"I am settled in London now [1886] and have a large district to look to, and am out daily among the

poor, which I like. . . . . I liked the quiet at Carisbrooke, which I have now left. . . . . Now I really enjoy the return to more active life, for the alternation of contemplation and action is just what suits me."

"To me it is so interesting to see the close parallels between nature and Grace . . . and the Angelic Doctor it is who draws them out. May we learn from the 'golden wisdom' of St. Thomas, as the Holy Father bids us do! . . . .

"When it comes to the application of the great principle of *Caritas* to the ordinary toils and trials of daily life, we feel necessarily a difference, according to the nature of the different works which we take in hand. Some are direct acts of charity to God, or to one another . . . . Others (such as giving music-lessons) are not direct exercises of Charity, but fall to the soul in the shape of duty, which is often in conflict with affection. In the doing of such things, you may like just the *Caritas* in the act, without necessarily liking the act in itself. So many things it is impossible to like. We cannot like pain, and worry, and disappointment and vexation. But we may put sugar into vinegar, and love into trial; and then, although we don't love the *thing,* we love doing it. . . . . Hence a charming sentence of St. Augustine: . . . . 'O God, Thou commandest that these things should be endured, not that they should be loved: for no one loves what he endures, though he loves to endure it.'"

"I congratulate you with all my heart on the most happy occasion of your Profession. The dedication of the soul and the life to the Divine Lover is no small thing. It is a beginning and a foretaste of the everlasting life of Love to come; where the Beloved surrounds Himself with His lovers and communicates His loving Presence and gifts without end. Hence one of the old writers (Thauler, I think) speaks of the twofold Heaven of loving souls, the one here, the other

hereafter. And Henry Suso . . . . says that God does not want to deprive us of pleasure, but to give us pleasure 'in its totality.'

"But this of course supposes that the sweet love of God, than which nothing is sweeter, enters into daily life, actions, and sufferings; permeating them all with its Divine influence, and bringing the Divine Lover Himself to the soul, to share with it the life of Love on earth. And as so many are found who have not the courage to give the 'all' which is the price of this perfect love, it follows that they live (maybe in Religion) an 'unshared life,' which makes them unsatisfied and incomplete. . . . . The explanation is that they are not 'whole,' but divided; and so have neither one thing nor the other; neither the pleasures of the world, nor the pleasures of Divine Love. . . .

"We are not angels, and therefore we do not take the workings of the Divine Worker *per modum Angelorum*. Hence the saying of philosophy: *Quidquid recipitur, per modum recipientis recipitur*. That is not too deep for you, is it? . . . .

"We must have patience with our poor selves. Does not St. Francis of Sales say: 'Our misery is our glory'?—namely, because it becomes the occasion to the Divine Worker to display the riches of His Mercy upon us. . . . . Even sufferings are instruments in His Hands for doing His work. What is the work? To subdue us to Himself. How subduing is suffering! It brings us the Divine Will instead of our own will. Is not that most desirable?"

"Surely you went into your convent with heart and soul, with a spirit of sacrifice too in giving up the ——; taking the practical view that you had to measure your choice by your bodily powers, and perhaps also feeling that the union of action with contemplation was, after all, the *more perfect* life. In short, when you entered, I think you can say that you 'meant

to act for the best,' which always brings solid satisfaction to the soul, since we are judged according to what we *intend*; and if we intend to act for the best, we are taken for doing so. So it seems to me that whichever way it be, by means of the principle you may *bowl over* those troublesome fears, which may be among the *insidiæ diaboli* for troubling the peace of your soul, and so hindering your progress. For, as long as these fears disturb us, the 'stream will never run clear,' as St. Teresa says. And Fr. Baker also: 'Things which deject, perplex, entangle, and keep under the spirit *are to be avoided by all lawful means* in a contemplative course'—a most favourite sentence of mine.

"All this . . . . is said as being *such an important disposition to Prayer.* Now I come to another grand disposition; for, *if you want to enjoy the effect you must go to the Cause.* An immense deal of the full possession of the enjoyment of Prayer (specially as a habit) depends on the soul having a continually clear knowledge and realization of the greatness of God above it, and the nothingness of self before Him. . . . . Nor is this knowledge of Him so to rivet you on Himself that you cannot see Him *also* in His creatures. You must take in that God is the *God of Nature as well as of Grace.* . . . Thus, in 'all things bright and fair' we see Him Who is most fair: in the sun and sky and stars; flowers, fruits; mountains, lakes, earth and sea; and *specially in the human soul,* His own Divine image. All this enlarges the heart vastly, and enables you to love *all day long*—either God directly, or His creatures. And thus it is when other souls love us: they love what is *of God in us;* and for ourselves we gladly remain in the 'intrenchment of self-knowledge, where we have of ourselves but nothingness, misery, and sin.'

"Now all this being (as supposed) a familiar truth, you see how readily a loving soul rises up to God in Prayer. . . . Why should it live in its misery, since

it was made for God? Up, then, it mounts to Him, by the knowledge it has of all good being in Him . . . .

"'My God, I love Thee, first, best, and above all, as my one and only Good, and the Fountain of all goodness. Sweet Eternal Father, I see Thee as the only Good; and the ever-flowing Fountain all around.

"'Dear Eternal Son, I see Thee as the Divine Lover of God and men; overflowing in love in Thy Life on earth, and in the Blessed Sacrament.

"'Sweet Holy Spirit, I see Thee as the *Principle* of all Spiritual Life and action; flowing into souls by Thine own Charity; governing, moving, perfecting them, little by little, as they yield themselves to Thee.

"'O God, I offer myself for *Caritas sola, plena, secundum Te.* "*Ecce nos reliquimus omnia.*" I grieve for my sins. I detest, renounce, resolve against them, as far as they have opposed Thee, my only Good. May the merits of Our Lord wholly efface them. I cast them out of my soul into the sea of Thy mercies; and I cast my soul on Thy TRUTH. O God, behold all is Thine. Be Thou my All. "*Ecce ad nihilum redactus sum.*"' . . . .

"It strikes me that *all* your little questions may find their virtual solution in what I have here said. Why (*e.g.*) look and examine and note down the miseries of the Old Man when we *know* him but to *leave* him? Why get into so many littlenesses, when the grand flowings of the Divine Fountain are all around us, drowning our miseries in the deep sea of His mercies?

"I feel with you that there is much room for mere imagination in many particular notions we may form; but in the one great general and most grand thought of God, as the One Good, ever-flowing and over-flowing, as the Fountain of Living Water—here there is no mistake. '*Apud Te est Fons Vitæ*' (Ps. xxxv, 10)."

"I feel with and for you with all my heart, and enter so well into what you say. But I must give

you at once two most sweet lines on Death, which are from Adelaide Proctor :—

" ' Thy treasures wait thee in the far-off skies,
" ' And Death, thy Friend, will give them all to thee.'

" If you get dull and low, dearest Child, I recommend you to take these two pretty lines. . . . Then think on the beautiful life of Heaven, where we shall be with God and with one another, in a life of unbroken Love. Think of the lovely society there : Our dear Lord, Our Blessed Lady, the Angelic hosts, the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and all the Saints, and our dearly-loved friends, and all in perfection. What will be the scenery there—what the music? Try, dearest Child, to gladden your soul by these sweet thoughts . . . .

" Don't be anxious about your dear Father. The Sacraments of the Church *bring with them* the justification of the soul. . . . Who that is conscious of imperfection and shortcoming would not easily qualify his answer in some way, especially with a refined and tender mind? "

" You will already be comforted by those sweet lines I sent you. Keep the eye of your Faith steadily open, dearest Child, and view things as a loving child. How many have gone before us! And our turn, too, will come. Think of the life of Heaven sometimes, as I have put it to you; and remember the dear society we shall have there, and in Purgatory, too.

" I like to take a nice view of Purgatory. We know but little of it. I don't believe in those hard, material views that some poor, imperfect, over-natural-minded people put out. I like to consider life there as in an immense monastery, where God is loved above all, and where no faults enter; where souls are governed, and their allotted works of satisfaction or satispassion gone through; where ' visitations ' are held—perhaps by Our

Lord, Our Lady, St. Michael—where souls are getting finer and purer each moment, under the influence of the 'fire' of Divine Love. It may be that duties neglected here, or done imperfectly, will have to be gone through again, and done perfectly, so that thus the 'last farthing' may be paid. But doubtless the happiness of souls there is increasing every moment as the work of purification proceeds.

"So, *no gloomy thoughts,* my Child, about your dear Father. Enough that he is in the Hands of the Divine Lover of souls, to Whom he belongs much more than to yourself; for we *all* belong to Him together. So, *go on with your life of love* . . . . and be joyful. I don't like a gloomy view of Death, but a joyful one."

"I enter well into your many trials, dearest Child. As years go by no doubt the monotony of enclosed life is apt to tax the physique. Then, the living with *just so many women,* no more and no less, till one knows them through and through, must (I think) be teasing, and vexing and troubling to the natural man. Hence, as I say in the book: 'It is no small matter to live an enclosed life.' The Life of Love with the Divine Lover is, I think, the only real remedy for this. If others misunderstand such a one, her consolation must be that the Divine Lover understands her. It is a little matter to be *out* with creatures if we are *in* with God: whereas to be *out* with God while *in* with creatures would be serious; and here be solid in your doctrine. To be in the state of Grace is to be *in* with God: to be aspiring to Him is still more: to be in love with Him, degree by degree, makes the soul more and more His."

"I have lately been reading Montalembert's *Monks of the West;* and delight in the lives of our dear old Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Saints: Columba, Aidan, Wilfrid, Cuthbert, and Bede. Do you remember how

Columba was loved, and all the monasteries he founded in Ireland: his immense popularity: and then how he was told to leave it all, and how he went to the desert isle of Iona, and there founded the vast monastery that became so famous; from which went forth Aidan and the others, to evangelise the Northern tribes? And how Aidan went to Lindisfarne, and made of it another Iona; and how Wilfrid went there, and 'found not all perfect,' and how he left for Rome, to get the right view of things; and then returned, and 'all hearts were with Wilfrid' for a time. Then the fine old Abbess Hilda was against him, because he was too 'Roman' for her. She clung to the old Celtic ways, which were not quite in accordance with the Catholic spirit: not, of course, in things of Faith, but in matters of discipline. I love these dear old Anglo-Saxon Saints. I am still deep in St. Wilfrid."

Space forbids further quotations from a series of letters which, apart from their value to Religious and those entering Religion, form the most perfectly-preserved sequence of correspondence which ever flowed from Father Reginald's busy pen.[3] But this chapter may well close with the very last words he wrote to this dear spiritual Child:

"Go forth to meet the Divine Lover in the wedding garment of Divine Charity. And when you see Our Lord, ask Him to make me for ever a true lover, and ask the 'Little Flower' to obtain for me the same."

She died in 1926. His prayer was granted when he followed her a year later.

[3] It is hoped that publication of the entire sequence of these valuable letters, together with a large number of others of great interest, may later be possible. The quotations given above range from 1883-95 only; while the correspondence continued until January, 1926. Father Reginald's views on the expulsion of the Religious Orders from France (1903-4) are here most strikingly brought out.

Chapter VII

LETTERS (II)

Early in the year 1870 the famous Newman-Ullathorne correspondence took place. The dogma of Papal Infallibility was about to be declared, and all acquainted with the Life of Cardinal Newman are aware of the attitude he assumed on this question, before it became *de fide*. The private letter he had addressed to Bishop Ullathorne, then in Rome, had, by some means unknown to the Bishop, become public property, and had been published in the London papers, greatly to the distress both of himself and Dr. Newman. The cutting of this and other Newman letters from the *Standard* newspaper, old and brown, was among Father Reginald's private papers till his death. His intense veneration and love for Newman led him, at the end of Lent, 1870, to write and ask him whether it could have been by his permission that his letter to Dr. Ullathorne was published?

Newman's reply to this letter was as follows:—

"The Oratory,

"*Good Friday,*

"1870.

"My dear Father Buckler,

"Accept all the prayers and good wishes from me, which are suggested by this most sacred time, and my congratulations in anticipation of Easter.

"Thank you for your letter. You are quite right in supposing that my letter to Bishop Ullathorne was

most confidential, and that I had no hand whatever in its getting into circulation.

"It was one of the most confidential letters that I ever wrote in my life. And I wrote it as an absolute duty.

"I have no claim as a theologian, but I have a claim to speak as one who is now near seventy years old, and has experiences of various kinds in ecclesiastical matters. My rule is to act according to my best light, as if I was infallible, before the Church decides; but to accept and submit to God's Infallibility when the Church has spoken. The Church has not yet spoken, and till she has, not only is my freedom of thought in possession, and I may fairly consider myself right in what I think, [but] I have a very strong view on the present question. I think the movement party is going too fast. I recollect the text: 'Quisquis scandalizaverit *unum ex his pusillis* credentibus in Me, bonum est ei magis si circumdaretur mola asinaria collo ejus, et in mare mitteretur.' I wish the *Civiltà*, the *Univers*, and other like publications would think of it. How differently things went in the case of the Immaculate Conception. Step by step was taken *towards* it. The Church patiently waited till all was ripe. No Council was necessary. The theological opinion grew into a dogma, as it were spontaneously. But now it is as if certain parties wished to steal a march upon Catholics. Nothing is above-board; nothing is told to the Bishops generally beforehand—the gravest innovation possible (for it is a change in the hitherto recognised basis of the Church) is to be carried by acclamation. Deliberation is to have no part in the work. Open any theological book, and see what a different view is there presented to us. Turn to the first Council, in Acts xv, and there you will find that before the settlement there was a 'magna conquisitio.' Slowness in decision, tenderness for weaker brethren, are first principles in the exercise of ecclesias-

tical authority. Of course, I should not have written so abrupt a letter to my Bishop except confidentially, but if you saw a railway train at full speed bowling over some unhappy workman on the line, what could you do but cry out and gesticulate?

"Very sincerely yours,

"JOHN H. NEWMAN."

This letter, which is here quoted in full, not with the object of recalling a happily forgotten controversy, but to show the estimation in which its illustrious writer held the correspondent to whom he deigned thus to justify himself, is preserved in its original envelope, endorsed by the recipient: "Newman's handwriting." Another such envelope, from which the letter is missing, is postmarked 1863. On November 1st, 1871, Father Reginald addressed to Dr. Newman the following letter:—

"VERY REV. AND DEAR FR. NEWMAN,

"Would you kindly let me ask your opinion as to the best way of solving a difficulty urged by Capes in his book: *Reasons for Returning to the Church of England?*

"He says: 'We cannot have *absolute* certainty of the truths of faith, because the evidence of Christianity itself is only moral (*i.e.*, historical), and the conclusion cannot be stronger than the premisses.'

"With my kind and most respectful regards, and hoping that you are well, believe me to be, Very Rev. and dear Fr. Newman,

"Yours most humbly in Christ,

"B. REGINALD BUCKLER, O.P."

To which Dr. Newman replied:—

"In answer to your letter of this morning, I will say that I am not likely to send you a better answer

to your question than what I have already put into print, being the main subject of my *Grammar of Assent,* viz., from p. 150 to p. 485."

On December 18th, 1874, in answer to a further letter, Newman writes:—

"I could not answer your letter of last month when I received it. Now I write to say that this day I advertise a pamphlet on Mr. Gladstone."

—a statesman to whom there is more than one reference in Father Reginald's own letters. The last he received from him who had then become Cardinal Newman is dated February 16th, 1880.

"I thank you much for your very kind letter, and especially for your prayers for me, which is a special charity, now that I am getting so old. That consideration also will account for my feeling that I have no chance of being able to perform the act of devotion, which otherwise would be so grateful to me, to your wonderful Doctor, St. Thomas, in whose praise you cannot say too much.

"Some efforts I am obliged to make; but I assure you my state of health, or rather my strength, is not such as to make it prudent or possible for me to use my mind as a younger man could."

This letter is endorsed in pencil by Father Reginald thus: "This letter was on occasion of St. Thomas Aquinas being made the Patron of 'all Catholic schools'; and I had asked Newman to write something on the occasion."

Through his residence at Stone Father Reginald had become acquainted with Dr. Ullathorne, whose strong and forceful personality appealed to him, and whom he revered perhaps next to Newman. Of their correspondence only one letter is preserved, in the

Bishop's tormented, almost illegible handwriting, endorsed by Father Reginald: "I wrote to the Bishop of Birmingham to thank him for his volume of *Ecclesiastical Discourses;* and at the same time alluded to a point of philosophy on which he had remarked in his first *Discourse* on '*Science and Wisdom*'—viz., that 'the imagination comes not of the intellect, but of the corporal senses' (p. 158); and wishing to know if all philosophers would agree to it; and suggested that it was considered as being the result of the *compositum.* The above reply, in legible characters, is as follows:"

"BIRMINGHAM,

"*Dec. 6th,* 1876.

"DEAR FATHER BUCKLER,

"A busy man, I must apologise for long delay in replying to your kind letter about my book. There is one thing in it at least, that it is a sort of historical memorial of important occasions and events from the history of the hierarchy.

"Taking the whole three discourses on Science and Wisdom together, I think you will see that I have exhibited the actual relations between imagination and intellect. I have especially pointed out the intimate relations between the two, and how error, and delusion, and temptation gain their exaggerated power, through the mixture (and for a time, the subjection) of intellectual light with the error in the imagination. I also show how sensible images pass from imagination to intellectual forms. Thus I show their intimate alliance —the result not merely of book-reading, but of long years of observation.

"Praying Our Lord to bless and prosper you,

"I remain, dear Father Buckler,

"Your faithful Servant in Christ,

✠ "W. B. ULLATHORNE."

Another occasional correspondent of Father Reginald was Dr. Gonin, O.P., late Archbishop of Port of Spain, formerly his (French) Prior at Woodchester. One of his letters, published by Father Reginald's consent after he went to Grenada, in *The Catholic News* of Trinidad, was perhaps an unconscious influence in the determination of his own missionary vocation. Dated from Trinidad, in July, 1887, the letter opens by asking Father Reginald's prayers that its writer may find a suitable Coadjutor for work which had become too heavy for him, and continues :—

"I want still three or four priests. If, therefore, you hear of priests in England willing to work in foreign missions, and free to do so, you might mention Trinidad and refer them to me: and we might come to an understanding . . . . . .

"Now I see that you are deep in active life again, and that you are better for the change. I hope you will do a great deal of valuable work for Our Lord and for the Order. As for the general methods of preaching, I do not think any general rule can be adopted, as so much depends upon the dispositions, and special gifts or qualities of everyone. In principle, however, I think what you say is true: 'It is better in the beginning to write one's sermons, but the sooner he can speak *ex tempore* the better.' There is always more life and animation in the delivery. What is essential is to prepare thoroughly the matter in furtherance of the sermon, and its principal divisions. Then we feel more at ease when speaking.

"I can tell you that I heard myself Father Lacordaire say that, especially on solemn occasions, he spent several hours every day (and several days) in preparing his sermons. But he never wrote; he had naturally a great facility of speech. I heard myself

a M. Broglie ask him whether he ever wrote or prepared the *language* of his sermons. He answered before me that he sometimes prepared the *first* or the *two first phrases,* but added that he never delivered them as he prepared them.

"It seems to me that an accent of sincerity and the unction of the language tell a great deal upon the people, and both may be acquired or improved by meditation and prayer. 'The mouth speaks of the abundance of the heart.' Let us speak for God, and He will help us."

In a postscript the Archbishop reminds Father Reginald to send him one or two copies of his book (*The Perfection of Man by Charity*) when it was published.

Another correspondent of Father Reginald's was Mother Francis Raphael Drane, O.S.D., who succeeded Mother Imelda Poole as Mother-Provincial at Stone. Two of her letters to him have been preserved, the first relating chiefly to her book of poems, *Songs in the Night,* which he so deeply appreciated, and which he commended to most of his converts. None of his letters to her, unfortunately, are forthcoming; for it is perhaps in writing to Religious, especially those of his own Order, that Father Reginald was most entirely himself. The first nine of the following letters, of which it is impossible to give more than brief extracts, are addressed to Dominican Sisters.

"Mind, your consolations far outweigh your trials. Be sure and compute rightly. I will turn to Seneca for this, as you turn to Epictetus. He says: 'Some deliberate upon *parts* of Life, and not upon the *whole,* which is a great error.' A little bit of work; a little bit of trouble; the rules of an Institute, and twenty

other matters of detail are but little parts of life. They come and go; and fifty years hence it will matter little whether your love and service of God went on at ——, ——, or ——; nor will it matter whether your love and service were by a hidden, active, or suffering life: or by obeying in small things as a subject, or governing in large matters as a Superior. The truth is there:

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(a new and pretty device which you have taught me).

"'The mode of our employment is but an accident.' This is a golden sentence. . . . which I took from Bishop Ullathorne, and which for many years now I have made quite my own. What will matter then will be whether the soul has got to God by the life of mutual love; and how *near* it has got to Him by the development of its love here below. Probably a suffering soul will have got nearer than an active one, because in suffering there is much less room for Nature's play; and so, more room for the Spirit of God's inmost working. Then, further, our dedication to God in Religion is as the 'holocaust' which is all for God; without our picking and choosing.

"But what means Seneca by the view of the *whole* of life? Clearly, instead of looking so much at our own little present toils and trials, and being (as he says elsewhere) 'slaves to accidents,' we are to make a grand scheme of all our life. Thus, look at your life here and hereafter as 'all of a piece.' This life just the prelude and preamble for the next. Then the clear view of the ultimate end—Union with God by mutual love, begun here, to be completed there. Then:

'*secundum finem dirigendus est cursus*'; i.e., I make my daily life a steady progress to my end; taking what helps; rejecting what hinders my progress. . . . . .

"You must have great faith in the working of Providence; and believe that if, after all representations, you are appointed to A—— again, there, and nowhere else is the Divine Love and Will for you. CARITAS EST HIC. Let that be the watchword; and there your life of love has to develop. May it not well be that Our Lord wants to work upon souls in A—— *through your agency*? Where would such souls be if you were at B——? Then, look at it on the other side: if you got to B—— by any management of your own, you *might* have mistaken or mismanaged a soul there; might have done it harm; and that wouldn't have happened if you had been at A——. Or again, at B—— you might have slipped and broken the jawbone, and become deaf for life; and that wouldn't have happened if you had been at A—— . . . . . .

"Both Epictetus and Seneca were contemporaries of the Apostles, and neither of them Christian. I consider them both among the best of the pagan writers. . . . . Now, you will never reckon among your trials the one experienced by Dame Gertrude More, O.S.B. —that of being a 'starved soul.'"

(1908).

"Most pleased was the Old Father to receive your kind greetings for his Feast [Feb. 12], and the same served for his birthday on the 14th. So that your Feast coming on the 13th, he is at your right hand and on your left. So pleased to . . . . help you on as time advances. For indeed it is advancing, for my next anniversary brings me to the entrance of my seventieth year! Yet (as Cicero says) I have the *adolescentis aliquid*, and cannot say I feel yet the decline of life.

"Your diagram I think perfect: VERITAS in the horizontal, to denote its settled breadth in the mind;

and CARITAS coming from above downwards on our souls. And do you know (I think not) that in early years VERITAS was my word, and then afterwards CARITAS? I still have by me my little MSS. in the 'days of VERITAS'; and a special diagram fitting everything into it. This was before the sun of CARITAS had risen. But they both must ever be together. *Veritas Domini manet in æternum; et: DEUS Caritas est* . . . . . .

"Thus it is: Truth for the intellect; and *Caritas* for the heart."

(1911).

"Do you know? I am going to join the Dominican Mission in Grenada. To-morrow . . . . I am leaving Woodchester . . . . and sailing on Thursday in the *Sargasso* from the London Docks. It will, of course, be very Apostolic work. I shall have to 'give myself to the people.' It will be *Caritas in actu* . . . . My new book . . . . *Spiritual Perfection through Charity,* will be showing itself when I am far away. So now, living free from books, I shall be able to find full time for giving myself to missionary work among the coloured folk.

"I've lately been enjoying the charming autobiography of Sister Thérèse of the Holy Child. . . . . Her writing is quite delightful; and I have taken many notes from it. . . . . Remember me in your prayers during the voyage; and if you know 'little Teresa' ask her to see to me. She was so fond of helping on the work of souls; and said she wished in Heaven to be still working on earth."

(1913).

"Dear Father Albert[1] has passed beyond the Veil. I heard this by cablegram. . . . He had a long time of the infirmities of old age, and so there is a certain relief in his getting into the world of spirits."

[1] His brother William.

(1925).

"Talking of things we have to do being 'accidental,' provided we keep to the right Spirit within, have you ever heard how accidental it is whether we polish novices, knives, or niggers? . . . . I am still very busy, with constant work, and in good health; and the doctor here, a little time back, gave me thirty more years. Perhaps there are but very few Sisters who remember the Old Father now?"

To another Religious:—

(1920).

"It [the Sister's Jubilee] has been a most solemn and highly gratifying occasion to you. . . . How well I remember you at seventeen, and now, are you not near seventy? Fancy —— at seventy!"

(Follows information about his life and literary labours in the past.)

"This much about the Old Father's work, to his dear Child from seventeen to seventy. He is still fit to climb a mountain, and cross a cataract, of which we have many here."

(1925).

"I keep very well, and hard at work, with no inclination yet to 'get on the shelf. . . . I pray specially for you. I was lately reading in the 'Valley of Lilies,' by à-Kempis, that 'Love of God purifies the soul from all past faults, and cleanses and cures its wounds.' So, when death comes, you must be like that."

To another Religious:—

(1906).

"Much did I sympathise with you yesterday, seeing your lack of hearing power; remembering you so well as I do when you were in the bloom of youth. . . . How consoling it is for you to have the blessings of sight and speech; walking and working power, etc., etc., together with all the other enjoyments of the

higher order in the world of Grace, which are so plentiful in Religious Life. Still, there is the feeling of 'solitariness' that often comes over those whose want of hearing shuts them off a good deal from those around them. But . . . . we are all bound to be 'hermit spirits' more or less; since our inmost thoughts are utterly hidden from everyone about us; shut off by the enclosed hermitage of the bodily frame, unknown to others, but known to God: all this being doubtless part of the scheme of Providence in our regard, to tell us that we are not for *them,* but for *Him. Et intrinsecus esse beatitudinem nostram'* (St. Augustine)."

"I fancy a quiet Retreat may suit you. If the power of bodily hearing is much withdrawn from you, there is the 'ear of the heart' within, that may easily catch Divine whispers.

"I recommend you the grandest of all devotions, which is devotion to the Presence of God. It is the thing for all of us, but so fitting, so helpful, so sustaining, so consoling for those who are not allowed to hear or see much with their bodily organs; though they may hear and see so much within, especially seeing that 'the Kingdom of God is within you.'

"Now, I will give you a sentence about the Presence of God which I culled from one of the old Spiritual writers. I got it, I suppose, over thirty years ago, and have often used it, for myself and others. It is this:—

> "'The Presence of God alone is infinitely more advantageous to the soul than all spiritual books together.'"

To a Franciscan Nun:—

"Reading Seneca lately, I found him urging on us to have some 'design' in life. 'Some' (he says) 'think about the *parts* of Life and not upon the *whole.* What wind will serve him that is not yet resolved upon

his port? He is a rash seaman who never considers what course he steers, but runs at a venture, as if he would brave the rocks.'

"Now, dear Sister, I leave you a little with Seneca. He was a contemporary of St. Paul, and they may have met."

The following excerpts are taken from a long and beautiful series of letters (from 1907 until the last years of his life) written to a Benedictine Nun. Want of space alone precludes the publication of the greater part of this correspondence, only rivalled by that with a Religious of another Order, already quoted.

(1907).

"It is impossible for the Old Father not to feel pleasure when he knows that his books are used and loved. To tell you the truth, I love them myself; and my way is, when they are finished, to take them to the Altar, lay them just where I say Mass, with the words: 'Dear Lord—Thine and mine . . . .'

"Much do I value your prayers for my novices. . . . . Pray for a few more nice ones in their 'teens."

"You will find all the enclosed good classical music. I haven't tried them at the piano, but I think every note is in its right place. If any one sounded wrong and you will let me know, I will correct him.

"I specially recommend *Tota Pulchra* just as it stands. Its harmonies go to the soul. So many *irruptions* get into musical settings . . . . silly grace-notes and turns are put in, which serve distraction instead of devotion. I take it that none of these pieces belong to the Benedictine liturgical order of things; so that if they differ in a few accidentals from old ways of rendering, you will, I fancy, be allowed by the Ven. Prioress to aspire to perfection, even in music."

"Needless to say, it is among the consolations of my old age (though I don't yet feel old, nor do I feel yet the decline of life, but am much better old than I was young)—the consolation, namely, of feeling that other souls are helped by anything I have ever said or written. . . . . .

"I see you have a genuine interest in what I call the 'great and dear' principles. All consecrated souls should show that. They should have something of the like enthusiasm in Divine things that children of the world have in natural things. I always call this 'the unanswerable argument. . . . . .'

"You say well that . . . . 'there is a great deal to be done in the way of mortification.' We may say that all the work is here. Take the example of a vessel filled with earth that has to be filled with gold. The vessel is the soul; the earth in it signifies all its earthly sins, miseries, and shortcomings; and the gold signifies '*Caritas*' bringing the soul to its union with God. Now, God is ready to fill the soul, as soon as it is emptied of its earthy impediments; but this emptying means renunciation and mortification."

(1908).

"I fear critics think I use the same words too much. Yet, did they not say the same of St. John the Evangelist? When words mean the Great 'All' we must sound them, and din them in."

(1909).

"Now all this work [of Perfection] has to be grounded on Humility. . . . . The humility of the mind is easy enough. A careful lesson of half an hour will give it to us for life, from the two texts of Our Lord and St. Paul:

"1. 'None is good but God alone' (St. Luke xviii).

"2. 'If a man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself' (Gal. vi., 3).

"The humility of the heart . . . . follows from that of the mind, by embracing humiliations when they come; humbling what is *of yourself* in you, to what is *of God* in the other. This is not difficult to an earnest soul. If a soul is not earnest in spiritual progress it is difficult, because the habit is not sufficiently formed to serve the soul when occasions come. And of course if the higher habits are not there, the lower are; and thus souls think and speak from the habit of pride. All this shows how the element of mortification is wanting; and of good mental prayer too, which would open the spiritual eye to these things. Thus, again and again we learn that our shortcomings are attributable to the want of prayer and mortification; and of course if they are not sufficiently maintained the life of CARITAS remains undeveloped."

"I have five Simple Novices here, instead of twenty-four Professed at Hawkesyard. They are five dear young fellows; I took to them at once, and give them a daily conference, sitting together at one table in the Common Room. I do this that they may have pens and paper in hand; giving them note-books from the first. Then I just dictate to them; and the time passes most pleasantly . . . . Then we verify our texts and extracts there and then; and this teaches them to be exact and interested; and then they have their spiritual nutriment carefully prepared to feed upon afterwards."

(1911).

"I am leaving here to-morrow . . . . and then set sail in the direction the great St. Louis Bertrand went over three centuries ago. It will be nice if I can reduce my life to the 'Love of God and souls'—just what the little Teresa so loved. I quite have her as one of my helpers now; and mean to be friends with her all my life. She so liked to help the Church and Priests and souls; and offered herself to do so till the end of time. What a lovely spirit that is!

"I have not seen the French Life, or her poetry, except one poem at the end of the English Life. What a chosen soul she was—how exquisite her spiritual teaching is! I have eight pages in small extracts from her Life and sayings, copied into my *répertoire,* and ever having these leaves by me, with those from Augustine, Gregory, Chrysostom, Bernard, Thomas Aquinas, Teresa, Catherine of Siena, and so many others—Newman especially. Would she not like to know all this? You tell her, will you? And get her to keep on helping me. I shall be working much alone, in the midst of the coloured folk. It must be *Caritas in actu.*"

From letters to various spiritual children in the world.

"We need a good amount of training and discipline to go steadily along the line, come what may; and of course all the trials of life are lessons to be learnt, and helping us to the formation of these habits, if we have a good will to manage ourselves. All this I know is philosophy, and the trials are things of the heart. Yet we are to govern the heart by the mind's best principles if we are to make the best of life here below."

"I am glad to hear you are engaged on making a convert. Put her on the Theological Virtues, and teach her the 'Little Acts,' because the Theological Virtues are the *real thing,* and there's no conversion without them. The Rosary and all other devotions have to stand on them . . . . I enclose little Acts for your convert."

"Don't be like an apple, looking fair outside and rotten at the core!"

"We go to God *pedetentim—i.e.,* step by step; trying and trying."

"I stayed three days in Birmingham on my way from London, and . . . . visited Newman's room; sat in his chair, and looked at his books, dear man; and knelt down and asked him to pray for Oxford and for England."

"I always *in re matrimonia* make the important distinction between being married and being matched!"

"You are going on to God by the way of the Cross: Our Lord's way, Our Lady's way; the Saints' way. . . . . Yours is a special life of trial. Try and buckle to where you are. Keep the *essential* spiritual life within; and let accidentals be fairly indifferent."

"I never recommend the Fifteen Mystery Rosary; never have; or use one myself. *Five is better.* You know where you are, then, if you lose yourself by distraction."

"*O Italia!* How I love those little villages on hills, with *campanili* crowning all, and mountains . . . . *montes in circuitu!* . . . . I always love Italy for its scenery and churches—but give me the British Constitution!"

"As you know, we cannot make facts to order; nor can we alter past facts. Someone, long ago, quoted the text: 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?' It was a certain Brother Paul (now long passed away); and he spoke to an elder and a wise Father (who is also gone, long ago). But the wise Father was equal to the prim Brother, and replied: 'No—but Brother Paul can change his manners!'

"You are very pronounced in your views both of yourself and others; as also in your words and ways. You come down like a sledge-hammer upon the —— folk, as on English Catholics generally, as being 'carping, gossipping, uncharitable, and not having the Spirit of Christ in them.'

"I cannot but be reminded, dear Child, in reading this, of St. Paul's words: 'Thou art inexcusable, O man (or, O woman); for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself. For thou dost the same things which thou judgest' (Rom. ii., 1).

"Had you been of a quieter, humbler disposition; not asserting yourself so much; not so determined to have your own views and will, and to set them so strongly against others; had you governed the tongue better, and striven neither to give offence nor to take it . . . . how differently would feelings have run. Hence, have you not brought these troubles on yourself? . . . . Taking Nature and facts as they are, feelings gather as they grow, as Horace says: *'Crescit indulgens.'*"

"Don't do a thing just because you like it. The question is: does Discretion declare it? You want more governance of the Holy Ghost about you, and this implies mortification to the natural."

These disconnected, but infinitely characteristic quotations might be indefinitely multiplied from the scores of available letters to hand. But this chapter shall close with an aphorism beloved of Father Reginald, and quoted by him twenty years ago in a letter to a Dominican Sister:—

"That very thinking ascetic, Pascal, said: 'There are but two kinds of people who can be called reasonable: (1) Those who serve God with all their heart because they know Him; (2) Those who seek Him with all their heart because they know Him not.'"

Chapter VIII

LITERARY LIFE

The pen of few modern religious writers has been so constantly or so consistently fruitful as that of Father Reginald. Not alone did his artist-soul crave for self-expression, as witness the regular descriptions of strange or beautiful scenes which followed naturally after each continental or transatlantic journey he made; but the soul of the Dominican Religious craved to give forth to the world the fruits of his contemplation.

He did so in many books; in pamphlets innumerable; in an almost ceaseless stream of articles—theological, controversial, or historical—contributed to the Catholic Press; to say nothing of the numerous descriptive papers published in the *Rosary* on his travels in Italy, Scotland, Canada, and, more especially, Grenada. The attractive task of collating and commenting on this mass of material is, unfortunately, impossible here. But though space permits but the barest outline of Father Reginald's literary activities, from his first published tract, *Holy Matrimony and Single Blessedness* (1894), up to the articles which to the end flowed from his ready pen, readers of the *Rosary* and other Catholic magazines—such as the American *Ave Maria*—will be familiar with his fine

and finished style; and aware to some extent of the truly extraordinary amount of his literary output.

Apart from the works mentioned later in this chapter are an early pamphlet, *A Few Aids to Faith* (an excellent manual for intending converts); *A Spiritual Instruction on Religious Life* (1910); and a collection of pamphlets which had already appeared in the Catholic West Indian papers, bearing as title, *The Life of Faith and Love*. His own favourite, apart from his *magnum opus,* to be described, was perhaps *A Spiritual Retreat* (first edition, 1907; second edition, 1924). Of this he writes to one of his spiritual children —a Religious :—

" Before it went to press I laid it on the Altar, just where I say Mass, and said to Our Lord : ' Thine and mine. Dear Lord, have a care of it. May the dear Angels see it all safe.' And then I dropped it in the common post, having no other copy of it."

Third in his affections came perhaps *Spiritual Consideration* (1912), which was published in New York.

" I asked our Provincial if he would let me offer it to Benziger, and he actually gave his *placet*. Then I wrote to the American Provincial, asking the favour of his approval . . . . and wrote also to Benziger, asking if he would take it; and I have affirmative replies to all! I quite wonder at it all; and I am going to call the book ' My American Child ' (to myself of course). So will you pray that all may proceed safely and securely? Thus during the voyage [to Montreal, for the Eucharistic Congress of 1910] I shall be going over it very carefully, and it will be dear delight to do

so. Then I leave it behind me there, and others work it out. Is not that quite enjoyable?"[1]

But it is hardly too much to say that all his other books were of minor account to Father Reginald beside his great life-work, *The Perfection of Man by Charity*, of which the first edition appeared in 1889; the second in 1894; and the third, under the changed title of *Spiritual Perfection Through Charity*, in 1912. Of this book all that can be said here follows in Father

[1] Father Reginald was himself no mean critic, as is seen in the following letter, dated February, 1920:

"1. On p. 198 of your *St. Catherine of Siena* you seem to put St. Peter of Alcantara as one of her contemporaries. But St. Peter was a sixteenth century Saint; friend of St. Teresa. How do you explain this?

"2. In treating of 'schism' you must remember its theological definition as being 'a pertinacious separation from the authority of the Roman Pontiff.' This being so, I consider the 'Schism of the West,' as it is called, to be somewhat of a misnomer. It was a most deplorable time, when the Church's 'human element' was so abounding; but the 'Divine element' was there too. We can't help the human element; and whatever it was then it was not so bad as the 'schism,' if you call it so, of the rebel angels in Heaven. And that the Church righted herself after such abuses of those times is one more note of her Divine constitution. How different were those divisions, so soon healed, to the 400 years *pertinacious* separation of England from the Holy See, were they not?

"3. On p. 175 you speak of these troubles 'endangering the safety, *if not the existence*, of the barque of Peter.' Is not this something of a *de subjecto non supponente*? We cannot ever suppose the barque of Peter as non-existent; and the same may be said on the line on p. 191: 'plunge the whole of Christendom into the abyss of schism.' This may be *hyperbole*.

"Then there is the distinction between *material* and *formal* schism. I take it that many of our Anglican friends are in material, not formal schism; and so I think many were so, during those troubles of the fourteenth century; considering that St. Catherine and St. Vincent Ferrer were on opposite sides. This alone shows us how difficult it was to decide."

It may be added that not one single review of the book in question noted the errors unhesitatingly detected by the theologian of eighty.

Reginald's own words, and in those of one of our greatest living Dominicans; but to the meanest intelligence it is obvious that this great book must be the outcome of a lifetime of patient and arduous study; and, like Rembrandt's *"self-portrait"* that it represents the desire for self-expression of an ardent and mystical soul.

The progress of *The Perfection of Man by Charity* can be traced step by step in the series of letters from which extracts are given in Chapter VI. Father Reginald had given to his correspondent one of the MS. copies of which he made so many. In one form or another he wrote the entire work thirteen times—surely a record, when one considers the enormous mass of the notes and references alone. The latter were written in a small and perfect script, like that of a mediæval Missal; the text was in his own clear and beautiful writing. He writes to another Religious, regarding the new volume into which he had recast the original work[2] :—

"I always consider *Spiritual Perfection Through Charity* as my *chef-d'œuvre*. It took me over ten years to get it into the form in which you now have it. It grew freshly out of *The Perfection of Man by Charity*, which I wrote out again and again thirteen times; each time with many changes. These MS. books are all now in different places. The earliest I left at Woodchester. One of the best I gave to the Benedictines of Atherstone. I think the Passionists of Highgate got another; and I am not clear about the rest."

[2] It was to this Religious that Father Reginald once said that he had not used the pronoun "I" once in the course of the entire work.

It was in the seventies that he began actually to write the book. The early eighties saw him deep in his task. His artistic soul was never satisfied with the finished work; there was always, to him, room for improvement, or at least addition and alteration. But in November, 1886, he writes as follows:—

"One thing has resulted from (the Provincial's) visit—*viz.*, that the MS. is on its way to publication. I reckon on your special prayers that no barrier may stand in its way. I was speaking to the Provincial in view of getting from him . . . . leave . . . . to lend it or having it copied. . . . In the midst of conversation he himself suggested that it *come out*! Which point is a great satisfaction to me, and one I could scarcely have expected before he had seen the work. I, therefore, left it in his hands for several days, and he expressed himself to me very kindly about it, and said that it might go on to the Revisors. I, therefore, took it in hand, and put a few finishing touches here and there; took it to the Chapel [Carisbrooke], and laid it on the step of the Sanctuary, praying to the Beloved, Our Lady, and the Holy Fathers and Doctors, whose teaching I so wanted to get more known; and so posted it to Woodchester to Fr. Ambrose, Master of Theology, having previously written to him. . . . .

"He wrote very kindly of the 'celebrated work,' as he called it, and said he would take it in hand as an honour—I having previously said how pleased I should be to submit it to a *Magister Theologiæ*. After he has done it, it will have to go to Fr. Philip, the second Revisor; then to the Cardinal for his *Imprimatur*. So there we are. I look to your prayers, my dearest Child of Charity. I regard it as the work of the Beloved, and feel sure He will take care of His own interests.

"Should any impediment arise I shall take it as an

allowance of Providence, and think that it is not for me 'to know the times and moments which the Father has put in His own Power' (Acts i., 7). Of course you may suppose that to measure the delicate points of Mystical Theology by the strict requirements of the Schools is no easy matter; but such a weight of Authority is given in the footnotes that I hope our Father-Theologians will not dismiss the work."

December 26th, 1886.

"Fr. Bertrand lately came from Woodchester, and said to me one day: 'I saw the MS. there.' I was desiring to know how it was faring in the hands of the Revisor, feeling that when measured with the rigid methods of scholasticism it might get many good slashes and cuts. So I said, a little diffidently: 'Do you think that it will pass?' On which he replied: 'Oh yes, Fr. Ambrose just suggests a verbal alteration here and there.'

"I felt greatly consoled, and returned to my cell to thank the Beloved. And I ask Him, if He will, to let it go on. I feel that there is now every probability of its going on. I asked a Sister at Carisbrooke, who is much given to Prayer, to pray for its success, and she said: 'I will say the whole Rosary for forty days for this intention.' So I think it must go on. Pray for it, my dearest Child. I don't ask you to say much, but go through the 'Acts,' and then say 'one good Our Father,' which St. Teresa liked so much; and dwell on the words: *adveniat Regnum Tuum* . . . ."

Such humility and love could not go unrewarded. The book did "go on." But it lingered in the press. It was not for nearly three years that he could write:—

"The Book has at length appeared, and many, many thanks for your prayers that it is safely out. The journey from Aberdeen in the boat, and the question

whether (during the great Strike) hands would be found to unload it, made it a little anxious. But all has now passed. . . . . I almost wonder *how* it is that I have been allowed to bring out such a work, for it goes into the most delicate matters of Mystical Theology, where so many errors stand condemned, and where it is so easy to get wrong. But I have really measured myself so severely by the great authorities of the Church, and weighed so carefully each sentence I have written, that I hope nothing will be found to be blameworthy. Soon, no doubt, we shall see different reviews upon it. Pray, dearest Child, that nothing in these may be said amiss: for you know how people form their ideas from the newspapers."

In April, 1896, he writes:—

"An application was made to me by Père Raymond, O.P., of Oullins [the celebrated School of Lacordaire] to have my book translated into French, and the permission given. Another application to be translated into Italian. . . . But I still feel that it would be difficult to make a readable book of it, when put into another language. I fancy my style of verbiage is just for English, and that it would hardly be considered finished and polished enough for other languages."

It was in this year that Father Reginald published a telling controversial pamphlet, *A Few Plain Thoughts upon the Anglican Movement*. It is the result of deep learning, wide historical knowledge, and excellent common-sense. Few of the many tracts published on this subject are more conclusive and more to the point. It is greatly to be regretted that so valuable a little work is long out of print, since the matter with which it deals never dies.

He took no active steps about the translation of his great work, for the reasons stated above; and also

because: "I have such a devotion to leaving all these things to the working of Providence." Perhaps because the mutterings of the threatened storm so soon to break over France were already audible, it does not appear that the proposed translation was ever made.

In 1898 appeared a short work, *A Good Practical Catholic,* of which he writes:—

"I have put some of the best thoughts I have ever had into that work; and numbers of them are grounded upon the thoughts of the Angelical Doctor. I feel, however, that my last child (for my books are my children) has its faults, two of which are in his face in the title-page. . . . The sub-title must be changed, lest people will think it is meant for the servant-tribe, whereas 'working' people include all, for we are all workers. . . . Hence in the second edition I mean to substitute for sub-title *A Spiritual Instruction to People in the World.*"

"I dearly love this last little child of mine, the *Good Practical Catholic.* I think the language is better than in *the* Book, and the style more pleasing and less dry. When the second edition comes I shall try to improve it more."

An *opusculum* of similar *format, A Few First Principles of Religious Life,* had already appeared in 1897. Five years later it, like the foregoing, went into a second edition. Of this he says (1897):—

"I have the *Few First Principles* in hand, and am meaning to add to it, and make it for Religious in general, leaving out Dominican references. . . . But my time is so taken up that I cannot get on fast, and it lies for days untouched."

In 1902:—

"Pray for my new *opusculum.* . . . It is finished and has passed the Revisors, and got the *Imprimatur.*"

This was the second edition. Later in the same year :—

" I wish all Religious in the world would get it, and aim at transferring the theories into facts."

Meantime *The Perfection of Man by Charity,* which had appeared in 1889, and gone into a second edition fifty pages shorter in 1894, was never out of its writer's thoughts. In 1905 he writes :—

" I am carefully revising the Book for third edition, making *so many* changes; cutting out and adding much. I'm even changing the title. I thought at first of *Spiritual Perfection Through Charity.* Now I've come simply to : *Perfection Through Charity.* Give me your judgment about this, for women come straight to the point. The old title was too long, and the word *man* in it I didn't like. . . . My Book will never be popular."

" I've settled now on *Perfection Through Charity.* I think the word *through* better than *by,* because it tells us that *Caritas* works our perfection *through* the other Virtues, as the Book already shows."

He reverted, however, to the first title, and *Spiritual Perfection Through Charity* appeared in 1912, when its author was already in Grenada. Of this book Father Vincent McNabb, O.P., writes as follows :—

" Horstman, in his Introduction to *Richard Rolle of Hampole,*[3] has given us an introduction to the work of one who may be given a place beside the Hermit of Hampole. ' The history of mysticism in England is not yet sufficiently known, most of the writers still being in MS. So much, however, is certain, that it had many adepts, and that the deep and passionate mind of the English was favourable to it. Nowhere

[3] Swan, Sonnenschein & Co., 1895. I, xi.

had Christianity been embraced with greater warmth than in England; and nowhere was there a more fertile soil for mysticism.'

"Of Richard Rolle's mystical principle Horstman writes words that might well have been written about the author of the *Perfection of Man by Charity*. 'Such are the outlines of Richard Rolle's system, if system may be called what lacks every philosophic or metaphysic ingredient. His system is not a metaphysic system; his God not a metaphysic God. He implicitly believes in the Bible and the Fathers, and rigorously resists any attempt to introduce reason into the domain of Faith. . . . His mysticism is *in amore Dei canere et jubilare quasi raptus super terram; in se deficere et in Deum pergere*. [Through love of God to sing and carol as one lifted above the earth; to withdraw from oneself and to draw nigh to God.] His system is religious life; not theory. His principle is Love.'[4]

"In 1889 appeared Father Reginald's book *The Perfection of Man by Charity*. It was the maiden effort of a Friar in his fiftieth year. At once it invited criticism. To place it amongst the difficult category of ascetical literature was a problem. The hasty critic thought it could easily be classified with a bevy of ascetical books. The thoughtful critic had to satisfy himself that it was not a class by itself. At first sight it could easily be likened to a hundred previous writings. On second sight its unlikeness to all previous writings made it a work apart.

"Although its writer might have claimed to be an artist, and even the son and grandson and great-grandson of an artist, yet the book was only undesignedly, if at all, an artistic production. Like the true artist, who is born, not made, the *Perfection of Man by Charity* had not been made, but had happened and had grown. Every line of it reeked of the note-book. To many of its readers or critics it might easily have

[4] p. xiv.

seemed only a glorified Table of Contents: at best, a *Catena Aurea,* a golden chain of ascetical links taken from the inspired and non-inspired writers of the Church.

"Yet though the book seemed to be a tissue of quotations, the patient reader found that this tissue was really a web woven with mediæval skill by one supreme principle. The unconscious artist had shown his craft in the text, which ushered in the book:

> "'WHEN . THOU . SHALT . HAVE . READ . AND SHALT . KNOW . MANY . THINGS . THOU MUST . ALWAYS . RETURN . TO . ONE PRINCIPLE.'
>
> (*Imitation of Christ,* B.iii., c.43.)

"Such choice of a text betokened a genius for quotation. Yet the undeniable genius of the *Perfection of Man by Charity* was not in the matter of words, but of principles. Father Reginald Buckler had not perhaps the gift of far-sight or broad-sight; but he had the perhaps greater gift of insight. He was like some animals who kill their prey by a sudden stroke which stills the heart. This insight went with a clear-sightedness which saw almost instinctively, as in dealing with the masterpiece of à-Kempis, where the master-principle was to be found.

"It is to the credit of Father Reginald that while others of his contemporaries who had greater opportunities of theology were nothing but repetitionists, he used his slender opportunities to make a work of almost national originality. The nineteenth century was not an age of much respect for Scholasticism. St. Thomas was *magni nominis umbra* even for Catholics. Of the few who still looked on the Angel of the Schools as the sole hope for sound Catholic learning, still fewer thought of him as the consummate master of scientific mysticism. How great was the insight of the *Perfection of Man by Charity,* when it succeeded not merely in recognising St.

Thomas as the supreme mystical Teacher, but unerringly fixed on his supreme mystical principle.

For the present writer the *Perfection of Man by Charity* seemed to do in the sphere of ascetics what Butler's *Analogy* did in the sphere of apologetics. Both books gave a new outlook on a vast region of facts and thoughts about facts. The mind to which such a new outlook has been vouchsafed is never again of the same way of thinking. He may not remember one phrase of the book which has enriched his life. But even as an intellectual habit is not something we remember, but something whereby we remember, this new way of thinking is not a remembered thought, but the power of calming the headlong steeds of thought along the way unto the end of all thinking—God alone!"

NOTE.—Father Reginald's great humility as regards his own style, and "verbiage," is in striking contrast with his conviction as to the theological and doctrinal importance of his work, from pamphlets to the *magnum opus*. "I have not much command of mere words, and therefore must put thoughts into my words," he writes to a friend. Two characteristic letters to a firm of publishers may be quoted in connection with this. They are respectively dated February and July, 1926.

"I am sorry the Committee is not desirous of accepting my tractate on *The Love of God and Prayer,* seeing that it is for lack of this that *the whole world is sick unto death* . . . . I know that to many the treatment *de contemplatione* is apt to be intricate and difficult. They do not realise that this prayer is *chiefly* from the Good Spirit Himself, and that we cannot be drawing out all His secret ways by natural standards. What they need is the *disposition* for His work in them. The distinction between that is *per modum actus* and *per modum habitus* has to be very clearly denoted . . . . In any case I am now re-writing this chapter, at least for the sake of posterity."

"It is difficult for me to see how in the nature of things a tractate should always be of a certain length, and of so many

words. I believe there are many who will read a short treatise who would not read a longer one.

"Somehow or other I always make a study of retrenching my words, instead of multiplying them. If I find even *one* word in a sentence not needed I immediately cut it out. The crisp and clear style I always strive for.

"Moreover, *in hac materia,* I feel that it is not so much the *verba* as the *res* that people need; and I prefer to put grave things into few words."

The reference in the first sentence of the first letter is of course to the title of the tractate; not to his own text.

Chapter IX

GRENADA

If the Eucharistic Congress at Montreal proved the determining factor in Father Reginald's decision to volunteer at the age of seventy-one for the Grenada mission, it must be believed that the idea was not altogether new to him. He himself would possibly have attributed that decision largely to the influence of Ste. Thérèse of Lisieux, to whose protection he commended himself so frequently before his journey; and to whom he had so great a devotion all the rest of his life. But he had always been deeply interested in foreign missionary work, and admired those who voluntarily undertook it.

"To leave one's country and friends, and go alone to a distant part of the world to work there for souls, shows much character and devotion,"

he writes in 1897 of a lady who had done this. And again (1901):—

"Maybe distant lands need (as they do) many more Priests and Sisters to help in the harvest of souls."

In the same year he writes:—

"We are to take a foreign Mission in the Island of Grenada, and five Fathers are to be there. I hope persecution in Europe will send missioners to the heathen."

The germ of this idea, thus planted, took ten years to mature. The climate of Grenada had proved fatal to more than one of the younger Dominicans sent out

when he wrote to the same Religious (Feb. 25th, 1911):—

"There is a bit of a chance of my joining our West India Mission in Grenada. Our English Fathers have the entire island under them. Seven Fathers are there now. The harvest is great; the labourers few. Now my books are finished I am drawn to *Caritas in actu*. I've long had day-dreams about foreign missionary life. . . . . I should go quietly to work, yet constantly. Unless more help is given I fear for the overworked Fathers. They need double the number there. . . . . The Provincial comes on Monday and will tell me one way or the other. I should soon cotton to it, and yet am prepared not to go if he so arranges. So I can say: *Paratus sum et non sum turbatus*. Pray that the Divine Providence will arrange for the right."

It was so arranged; and in his last letter from England to this correspondent, telling of the death of his elder brother, Father Edmund, who passed away on Friday in Passion Week, 1911, he closes with the words:—

"So now, having said so much about Abstract Charity it is fair to go to the concrete."

The death of Father Edmund, whose 'iron will' had been instrumental in helping him into the Church, was a great blow to Father Reginald. Each of the three brothers had already kept his Jubilee in the Order; each singing High Mass with the two others as deacon and sub-deacon. His own Jubilee had taken place five years earlier, when (March 9th, 1906) he wrote:—

"It was certainly *rarissima occasio* for the three brothers to offer for the third time their Jubilee Mass together; making 150 years between them in the white habit. The Provincial in his speech said that it was

an occasion which he felt might be a matter for comment 'in Heaven.'"

But to him who had so "schooled his soul" to detachment from all human relationships, the loss of this beloved brother three weeks before his own departure did nothing to weaken his resolution. An old friend writes:—

"I went to meet him at Paddington three days before he sailed. He had just been to bid farewell to his sisters at Oxford. I saw him coming through the crowd of passengers, weighed down by the heavy things he was carrying. He wore the familiar old Inverness; his face was so pale as to seem almost transparent; his eyes were half-closed, and cast down; his lips moved in prayer as he was elbowed by the throng. . . . He stayed at Haverstock Hill, and I saw him frequently that week; twice he came to see me. He was very quiet; and 'took it all as a matter of course.' . . . . The night he sailed I met him by arrangement at Fenchurch Street station. He arrived alone. In spite of himself I could guess from his pallor and his expression how terrible the last wrench had been. Otherwise he was exactly the same as ever; just as quiet and as matter-of-fact. We went by train down to the docks; and there had to walk some distance over rough ground encumbered with rail-tracks, stones, and coils of rope to reach the boat. It was 11 o'clock; quite dark and very cold. A porter had taken his luggage. We picked our way over the difficult path. Twice or three times he stumbled, and once would have fallen flat had I not caught his arm. It was his *Via Dolorosa*. . . .

"He had a good cabin on board, to himself. . . . . I knelt on the muddy deck to receive his last blessing; other passengers looking curiously on, and sailors hurrying to and fro. His last words to me, like his first, were a blessing."

He wrote a spirited account of his voyage for the *Rosary,* to the files of which the reader must be referred for the many articles descriptive of Grenada which Father Reginald loved to write. They touched at Dartmouth to take in mails; and about ten days later reached Grenada. Father Raymund Pius Devas, O.P., writes :—

"He began his ministry in the little town of Gouyave and the very large and populous parish of St. John's. The Old Father, as he liked to call himself, was fond of telling the story of his arrival at the presbytery in Gouyave. It was sufficiently early in the week, and the departing priest had just time to 'hand over' to Father Reginald, and to say: 'This is the key of the safe. There is nothing in the safe; but you will get some money on Sunday in the collection in church, and perhaps by Baptisms.' And, as though the outlook was not already discomforting enough, it so happened that the Rates and Taxes for the quarter came in that very week!

"Money-matters, however, never worried Father Reginald—a fact which, as may be imagined, sometimes made things difficult for his successors! He himself, of course, had so few needs. He did not smoke; he seldom touched spirits; he ate very little meat (which always had to be minced). In fact his diet was of the simplest: soup, bread or toast (but always soft); eggs, fish; milky puddings and fruit, especially one or other of the many varieties of bananas. He admitted a weakness for marmalade, and also for soft ginger-nuts! If, as sometimes happened, food ran short (of the kind which he could take) he would have recourse to a little supply of chocolate which he kept by him 'by way of nutriment' to supplement an insufficient meal. And for this he always religiously asked the permission of his local Superior. For drink,

Father Reginald used lime-juice, ginger-beer, or, in the season, sorrel; but we must not imagine that this abstention from alcohol was the secret of his longevity: his case, I think, was an exceptional one; for a moderate use of the locally-manufactured rum seems to be beneficial to the European in the tropics as an antidote to malaria; and it is by no means incompatible with old age.

"For awhile Father Reginald looked after St. Mark's as well as St. John's—an immense work. Then he was replaced at Gouyave, and lived at Victoria, which is the centre of St. Mark's parish For three years he was parish Priest of St. David's; and then from about 1915-18 he was back again at St. Mark's. Victoria itself is not much more than three miles from Gouyave, so that the Priests of those two places often meet. On one such occasion Father Reginald was in the presbytery at Gouyave for the mid-day meal, which in the West Indies is called breakfast. He looked utterly exhausted and done-up. The other Father therefore insisted on his drinking a cocktail, with the result that the Old Father slept soundly till three o'clock in the afternoon. Unaccustomed to such sound sleep, and remembering he had a funeral to conduct at Victoria he rose quickly and exclaimed: "My word! I must pull myself together!'

"On leaving Victoria Father Reginald lived for awhile again in St. David's; but from 1918 onwards St. George's became his head-quarters. His religious activities, however, were not confined to Grenada. Apart from his frequent visits to Trinidad, for the purpose of giving retreats to the Priests there, and to the different convents of nuns, the Old Father laboured for awhile in the Island of Carriacou, nineteen miles N.E. of Grenada; often enough making the voyage to and fro in a small sloop, or what English readers would understand by a fishing-smack. It was his proud boast, too, that he had spent a whole month by himself

—over Christmas, too—on the tiny islet called Petit Martinique, where there is a church, and a population entirely Catholic, of about 200. But the whole world was really his parish, and he was active with his pen right up to the last, engaged on religious and devotional subjects. The Anglican controversy, too, had a fascination for him even to the end: he was never tired of talking about it, and sometimes wrote of it in newspapers and magazines.

"If there was one thing which Father Reginald loved in nature it was mountain scenery. In the beautiful island in which he spent these last sixteen years of his life he had almost daily opportunities of lifting up his eyes to the mountains. Wonderful landscape views may be obtained from nearly all the presbyteries in Grenada; and Father Reginald never tired of these prospects; having, however, certain very pronounced favourite view-points. In his old age he realised that he was often asking the same questions over and over again, and with delightful simplicity he used to open conversation with: 'I daresay I have asked you before, but could you tell me. . . .' How very many times indeed used he to ask the present writer what was the name of such and such a mountain: how high was it? Which precisely was the summit of Mt. St. Catherine (the loftiest mountain in Grenada)? And what was that other peak near it, etc.? After dark he would go out on to the verandah, and with hand shading his eyes in characteristic attitude, would admire the planets and the stars. Jupiter, Mars, Venus were his favourites—the first being *facile princeps.*"

With his usual facility for adapting himself to strange surroundings Father Reginald soon became used to his tropical home, whose beauty was so congenial to him. His very strong sense of humour was frequently brought into play when working amongst

the coloured folk. Thus he writes in the *Rosary*—it is the sole quotation from his articles there which space allows :—

"Some of our poorer Grenadian folk have names that are quite remarkable. Visiting the sick in different parts, Mrs. Scholastic Thomas was one to be seen to. And in connection with a little school business, Mr. Delicious Bonhomme was introduced. Then, a custom very prevalent, and very inconvenient too, is that of the people having two or three different names. Thus one gives the last rites to Mrs. Penguin, and buries her as Mrs. Pascal."

In the following quotations from his own letters, which, could they be given in full, would, with his numerous articles, make up almost a diary of his sixteen years in Grenada, Father Reginald's attitude towards the War must be noted. At first he was unable and unwilling to believe the stories of German atrocities in Flanders; and incredulous on the subject of threatened submarines and Zeppelins. He says this distinctly to an English correspondent in New York, who had sent him a "terrifying" letter of prophecy, late in 1914. But very soon all this was altered, as will be seen. The letters quoted are written to various friends, and given chronologically, usually without other distinction.

1911.

"I am nicely settled here [Gouyave], living alone, with a church holding 500, and the people around 5,000. The atmosphere is Catholic; and we have our processions in the streets; and I take *Viaticum* far away in surplice and stole. The non-Catholics are very friendly to me, and they have a literary society

here which they invited me to address, which I did in white habit. Needless to say a 'blackie' literary society is something very different from an English one! They ask me now for a lecture on any subject I like.

"Confessional work is hard, and on special Feasts one has to be in the box literally all day, from 7.30 a.m. to 8.30 p.m.; with difficulty snatching a bit of time for mid-day meal; and when one gets up to go to that six blackies stand up imploringly, wanting to go; some from far off; and so I have to go back again, and leave the dinner to itself! Sick calls and baptisms and funerals are frequent. A vast proportion of the folk are of the black negro type; some very pronounced like regular Africans; others, brownies. . . . . The scenery here is quite beautiful, and is a constant compensation for the large proportion of this negro type. Large hills, wooded with tropical vegetation; palms, bananas, limes, bread-fruit, lemons, oranges, nutmegs, cloves, and cocoa-trees. Soft mountains above; rushing torrents below. I often come across these on sick calls, and sometimes have to jump from one rock to another, and so get across them. But I am so fond of torrents that I am ever ready for a jump, when the time comes!"

"I have housekeeping, and am just dismissing the black servant girl and the black 'grass' boy, for I have to keep horse and trap; the distances for sick calls being too far, and the weather too hot for walking far. So I drive along the road, then walk up hills among stones and palm-trees and rocky torrents. I keep well and enjoy the solitary life. . . . . I live chiefly on cocoa (beautifully fresh from the trees); bananas, and good bread. . . . We have no mills, nor smoky chimneys; no railways, motors, bicycles, or buses. . . . . If they cook they use wood or charcoal, and the little smoke goes out of the windows.

"I've come across a large scorpion in the Sacristy, and aimed a good blow at him, but missed, and he got behind the cupboard, and when a blackie moved this the creature was nowhere to be seen. I take it that these few ugly creatures are meant to hold us a bit detached from the many beauties that surround us, so that *all* may not be quite fit to please us wholly; that we may remember this is our exile, not our Home. If we did not see things thus what would be the *rationale* of scorpions and spiders? For an enormous spider was crawling in my bedroom the other day, about six inches across! I struck at him too, and missed once more. He crawled behind my washing-stand, and when I turned that upside-down, was nowhere to be found!

"The poor coloured folk are very Catholic; glad to see the Father and to bring him things. . . . . My little town is on the sea-coast, looking due west, so I have gorgeous sunsets."

1912.

"I am quite solitary here [St. David's]; being ten miles away from any town, and from any other Father. But solitude pleases me; and my people (blackies) reckon at 6,000. . . . The other Sunday I had thirteen Baptisms all at once, which takes a long time. Seven weddings were on the *tapis* at once, and five funerals came in one day, and a bad and distant sick-call into the bargain. . . . .

"We live in perpetual summer here. . . . . Here at St. David's the church and presbytery stand on a hill 500 feet above the sea. Behind are rising mountains, covered with tropical verdure, where monkeys make their natural home; and before are descending hills to the sea, two miles off. The trade winds give us a perpetual breeze, even on hottest days, so that the heat is greatly tempered; but one cannot walk out under the sun without an umbrella."

(To Father Albert Buckler, with a beautiful and elaborate pen-and-ink sketch of St. David's, and a similar description.)

"Our church stands on the rocky eminence, and looks like the old quaint French style of 100 years ago —something of this sort: . . . . The air is delightful . . . . the surroundings are very quiet—just to my taste, whereas at Gouyave we were in the perpetual noise of the slums. The presbytery here is nice and spacious, and I am busy turning out the drawers; ridding them of rubbish—liking everything neat, clean, and in its place. I am spending money doing up the bathroom, which was awful before. Cockroaches are numerous; and I roused a centipede from a dirty drawer, but he rushed away and was out of sight before I could get at him. . . . . I am quite 'out of the world' here, which I really enjoy; so that I have no newspapers. I find a nice little library here, with all Newman's works, thirty-five vols. in all."

1913.

"Do you know my dear brother, Father Albert, has gone also to the spiritual world?[1] . . . . He died very quietly at Haverstock Hill, and was buried at Woodchester. Thus, all my three brothers are gone before me; and naturally, as I am the youngest, and last of the Buckler race."

In this year took place the famous "Caldey Conversions," in which Father Reginald took the keenest interest and delight. He refers to them in many of the letters, of which space forbids the quotation.

"What splendid conversions were those at Caldey and St. Bride's. I had a charming letter from the Abbot a little time ago, in answer to one I wrote him, speaking of the pouring of Grace on Caldey Island."

[1] Father Albert Buckler died January 18th, 1913.

1914.

(The following five letters are addressed to a Nun of a celebrated Benedictine convent, which this year and later sent Father Reginald exquisite Altar linen and other requisites for the Sanctuary. He had so great a devotion to the Order of St. Benedict that, were it possible to imagine him anything but what he was, it would be as a Black Monk instead of a Black Friar. Several of the other letters in this book are addressed to the same Religious.)

"You must know that I have a 'book-fund,' coming from sale of (my) books; and Superiors let me have it by me, for the purchase and donation of the books. Hence, if you know of any soul, anywhere, who would like one of my books, I will send them for the asking, postage included; the fund pays for all. It is my work for souls; and from this little Island I love to help souls in any part of the world. In this way I have been helping them in India, America, Spain, Italy, Belgium, France, and Switzerland. . . . . Ever so many thanks for the little Pyx-bag. I took out eighteen Communions the other day to different parts; all in one morning; and fifteen another day."

"I should like a Ciborium cover much. . . . . I like them . . . . with the Sacred Heart on one of the pendants in red, with gold rays. There is much devotion here among the folk to the Sacred Heart. . . . . Be sure your travelling Pyx bag goes long distances with me. . . . . I don't let the Pyx hang on the neck, but carry it in the hand; and again and again I have to get across rough, stony rivers with it in my hand; and after rains these rivers become torrents. I've sometimes had to leap from one large stone to another, and often want a nigger's hand to help me."

"Your splendid things all in safety and perfect condition. I spread them on the table and blessed them; then took the beautiful stole down the church to the confessional . . . . for immediate use. One of the little Corporals I put into your new Pyx bag, waiting for the next sick call; a larger one I have put out for Mass to-morrow; and the rest, with *Agnus Dei* and scapulars I have put by me for giving to 'souls.' . . . . As for my old confessional stole which yours has replaced, I gave it into the Sacristan's hands to be burnt, for it was worse than *passé.*" (An allusion to a previous letter.)

"The beautiful [ornaments for the Altar] all safely to hand. The veil and bag are both in my Tabernacle now. I've had nothing like them since I've been on the Island. I often give the people Benediction from the Tabernacle, without Remonstrance, so, parting the curtains, the Ciborium shows with the Sacred Heart on the veil, which I myself even prefer to the Remonstrance. Will you let the Sister who worked the veil know all this . . . . letting her know how her work will . . . . help for years to come the devotion of my coloured folk? . . . . The purple confessional stole is my *only* one in use now; and as I sit there and look down on it over my knees I feel how beautiful it looks, for colour and work; and feel I've never had such a beauty before. . . . . The work of the Sisters fructifies amid the missionary work of this distant Island. . . . . I've been preaching on 'The Church and the World' and the War for the last six weeks—Sunday by Sunday. . . . . How nice to have a Pope *Benedict,* is it not? I welcome him, and like his face from the print I saw. It grows upon one. . . . . There is tenderness in his lips, as well as nobility in his head."

(To another correspondent he had written six weeks earlier: "We have just heard by cable of the death of the Holy Father; and there are the nations at war!

It is thought that the war killed him; and that his heart was broken over it. The world of course is the great natural power, and the Church the great spiritual power. I fancy . . . . that the Conclave electing the new Pope may be safer while the nations are engaged in war, than otherwise. . . . . We are in the midst of critical times just now, both in the world and in the Church.")

"I always go to sick calls, even distant ones, with stole and Pyx bag over the white habit; *never* by any chance wearing secular clothes. Consequently these . . . . . stoles get the wear. After wet the hills, steep and rough, are very slippery, and at times I tumble down. . . . . I have no instrument, so live without music. My choir is composed of blackies and brownies, and I can't hope for anything grand from them! . . . . Of course my work here is very direct and constant: thus it is that music goes, for souls!"

1915.

To a Religious:—

"If the net result of the War may be the putting down of Germany and the conversion of France, both the Church and the world will be great gainers by the awful War. Our Lord God it is Who strikes in order to heal. I wonder what Benedictines those were in Belgium whose monastery was destroyed? I hope not those of Maredsous, where the Abbot of Caldey went? I think Germany *will* be punished for her crimes against the Church and humanity."

"I hope the dear Caldey Benedictines are going on well? I believe they are straitened much in temporals on account of the War? I wonder how Maredsous is faring? I . . . . have given them [Caldey] a *memento* in Mass ever since the conversion, and continue it still . . . . I've no doubt 'Little Teresa' will be busy now, and want to be kept *au courant* of things now going

on . . . . How much I should have liked to know such a soul!"

"I am writing from a new part of the Island [St. Mark's]. I am in the NW. angle now, on the ocean's brink; and lovely mountains four miles inland. . . . . waves are rolling outside my windows all night long.

"Now I have thought of you at the Altar here, because I don't find nice corporals; and I say: 'What would Sister —— say to this?' They . . . . have lace round them, which *odio habui*. . . . . Some of the nice things you sent me at St. David's I have brought here with me, as they had a sufficiency there." (Minute details as to his requirements for the Altar follow.)

"All the Father's best thanks for . . . . the corporals . . . . I have written to Brother —— of Caldey to ask him to make me a purple vestment, for when I put on the one here on the first Sunday in Advent I found the front in tatters. I asked him to let me have the new vestment . . . . thin, thin, in view to tropical heat. Thin silk, thin lining. Here we have apparently old French vestments, made of heavy velvet, and 'spades' for stoles. Vestment-makers ought to be philosophers; considering cause and effect, time and place; quantity and quality. . . .

"I wonder if the dear Abbot is not in constant perplexity to make ends meet? They sacrificed so much for their conversion. God ever bless and keep them. I sent them £1 as an offering from this poor and odoriferous place—yet so beautiful in its surroundings. . . . . What will you say when I tell you the presbytery stands on the top of the church? I look down from my window on to the tops of the chancel windows. Of course it does not stand on the apex of the roof; but the transept of the church has a flat roof, and serves as the basis of the presbytery . . . . The roof of the church . . . . unfortunately shuts out much

of the mountain-range; and I look straight out on the red-painted roof. About me are the hovels of the blackies; and some of them just between me and the sea, *tristibile dictu* . . . .

"I have never once been in the doctor's hands since I came here, now nearly five years ago.'

To his sister:—

"As you see, I have got to Trinidad. The mountain panorama, with Port of Spain beneath, as seen from the sea, is quite superb.[2]

"Our Fathers here have a very large presbytery, quite like one of the Italian Priories . . . . four large palm-trees stand in each quadrangle. They were just beginning their retreat when I arrived; and chartered me there and then to give it, before I begin the convent one, which I did most readily. There are 29,000 Catholics in this town, so you may fancy the work to be done. . . . . The Archbishop . . . . said he gave me faculties for me to work *con amore*. . . . I knew him long ago when he was Prior of San Clemente.

"My first impression of the town of Port of Spain was that I had never seen anything like it before. The houses low, long, and daintily set out, trees in the middle of the street; streets straight; and straightly crossing one another. . . . . Outside the town is what is called the 'Savannah'—the Regent's Park of the place; but the beauty of it is being backed by those charming mountains, so green and feathered. . . . . There is a railway here, but I haven't seen it yet; and have never seen one since I left England. One of the churches here was built by Ashley, one of Pugin's friends; and is designed in what I call the 'good old Norman style' . . . . I like round arches very much:

[2] As in nearly every letter addressed to members of his family, one or more exquisitely-finished little pen-and-ink sketches are incorporated in the text.

and if I had to build a church, would choose the good old Roman style, with round columns and arches; semi-circular apse; and tall campanile."

1916.

"I visited also [in Trinidad] the Benedictine Fathers, who have a monastery far up a mountain-range. The Abbot asked me to address the Community; took me into the Chapter-room; and put me on his own seat. . . . . My theme was the General End of Religious Life as distinguished from the Particular End of each Order. . . . . An excursion was arranged, as the Abbot said, 'in honour of the Father,' and eight Benedictines and the Dominican started together at 9 a.m., all on foot; and gradually we ascended. . . . . The views were superb. No snakes on the way. We had a meal at the top, in a cottage, and returned by 2 o'clock.

"The Father was as a Benedictine during his stay; said Benedictine offices with them in Choir, instead of Dominican. Rose at 4; Matins and Lauds in Choir, 4.30; Pretiosa in Chapter-room; return to Choir for Prime and meditation; the Abbot's Mass, at which the Father assisted, then said his own."[3]

"I am so glad always to get news of Caldey. . . . . I see how earnestly the Abbot begs for helpers. I

[3] "The Abbot," he says in another letter of the same date, "is a learned theologian . . . . he gave me one of his books, a theological work in Latin, on . . . . 'Probability'; about which so much has been written. I was reading it there and discussed it with him; and we agreed well." A long and interesting article on his impressions of Trinidad was contributed by Father Reginald to a Grenada Catholic journal. He was especially struck by the "Cocorite"—the Leper Asylum, under the care of Dominican Sisters; of which Order there were six other communities in the city of Port of Spain. He was also impressed by the churches of St. Patrick and of the Holy Rosary. He mentions that a Dominican Father died of leprosy after being Chaplain to the Cocorite for thirty years; though not one of the Sisters, who have been in charge for fifty years, had succumbed.

wonder they are not found. Do you know, my brother, the architect, before he died, left £3,000 'for the Church in Wales'; as my brother had great devotion to the Welsh Church, having studied its history. Had he lived to see the Caldey conversions I would have asked him to give it all to Caldey! This is the *kind* of way to get money! . . . .

"What a difference this awful War must make to life in England. How dreadfully sad to find that the rulers of the world will not govern themselves or others by Christian principles; and not even by the light of philosophy, and the rules of discretion and humanity. But (as the Bishop of Clifton said) 'the cancer must be cut out of Europe'; and I suppose the Allies don't mean to stop until it is? . . . . My daily prayer is: *Exsurge, Domine, adjuva nos; et libera nos propter Nomen Tuum.*'"

"I wonder Germany lasts out so long, with [all the Allies] against her. All these cunning, underhand methods of mines and submarines of course help her, as also her Zeppelins. I pray daily: 'O God, do Thou fight for us,' as He fought for the people in the old law. But they were much more *en rapport* with Him then than we are now; and if men *will* live without God, I suppose He leaves them to themselvs. What lessons the nations will have by this War!"

1917.

(During this and the previous year Father Reginald suffered much from the loss of many letters written by and addressed to him. Two West Indian mail-boats had been sunk by submarines; and he was now fully aware of the horrors of the War.)

"It was only the German submarines that hindered my writing to you; thinking that all might go to the bottom of the sea. Indeed, this may go there, too, but I take the risk. . . . There was [your Christmas

letter] with many others, on my shelf, waiting for the War to finish!

"There is a talk, or an *on dit* of my being recalled to England. I don't know for what it is worth. Our Provincial says he is coming to Grenada about Christmas. . . . . He will of course either take me or leave me. Upon the best principles of Religious Life I have no say in the matter. I have promised in my profession to obey, and not to choose. . . . . If I stay, I continue to work for souls near the Equator; and if I return, I return to dear friends—and you among them."

Perhaps it was felt by his Superiors that after six years in the tropics the climate of England would soon be fatal to a man so aged; perhaps it was impossible to spare him from Grenada. Father Reginald himself, seven years later, when asked by the Provincial if he would not accompany him home (1923) replied that he had too much work to do at St. George's! To him it really mattered nothing where he was; since each place on earth was but a station on the way to Heaven.

"We are going through here what we went through in England a quarter of a century ago. The Anglicans give out their 'Continuity Theory' . . . . according to which we are the intruders. . . . . All this is going on now in this little Island. . . . . I have been *en rapport* with three of the Parsons . . . . and have gone to *facts* instead of theories . . . . for they are so fond of theorising, and when the great facts are brought up they don't attempt to grapple with them. . . . . All this is part of the Apostolic work. . . . . I don't judge them subjectively; but I look at things objectively, and I recommend them to say, with Newman: 'I will not blink the question.'

"We feel the effects of the War here, in the prices of provisions being so very high; and also in the inability to get goods from England. . . . . One of our boats was torpedoed; and other West Indian mails have gone to the bottom of the sea."

1918.

"I am still remarkably well; and am credited with enjoying an 'everlasting youth.' I was bathing in the sea yesterday. . . . . I think now that the general trend of things is in favour of the Allies. The submarines are being mastered, and America's help is magnificent; but actually to smash Prussian militarism —here is 'the rub.' A large and splendid victory. . . . I suppose might do it. But that is easier said than done."

"I enter my 80th year on February 14th next. But as my father lived to be over 100 I think I may get to 90 or more!"

"I have been (December 30th) three weeks in Trinidad. . . . . I just came for a little holiday, and am greatly enjoying it. At Grenada, the Vicar is moving me to St. George's from St. Mark's. I have been in the Island nearly eight years, and have always been alone among the people. Now . . . . the Vicar thinks with my advancing years, that I should not continue to be alone; so we are four Fathers at the new Vicariate; and of course I shall live more 'like a gentleman' there; for at St. Mark's I was in the midst of the slums, and had been there over three years.

1919.

"The Pyx bag is quite delicious, if I may use the word—quite the nicest I have ever had. . . . . The other, which you made long ago, has been a faithful helper to me. . . . . Lately, having a distant sick call right up into the mountains, and riding a donkey, a creature who *would* go on stopping—torrents of rain

came on, and of course I got wet through—habit, shirt, socks, shoes and hat—and your Pyx bag with me. . . . . Darkness came on, but happily the moon shone, and I got home, changed all things, and after supper found myself none the worse. . . . . From my window [at St. George's] I look down on the *smokeless* town . . . . and beyond . . . . there is a bold promontory . . . . surmounted by a fort, a church, and houses; and beyond this hills of the mountainous type, and the vast blue ocean making the whole horizon to the scene. . . . . "

" Here we are four Fathers, and sit down to table in quite respectable style. The church is large; people reckoned at 9,000, whites and blacks; music not so bad; organ poor; large numbers of communicants Sundays and weekdays; hospitals, prisons, poor-house, asylum, giving plenty of work to do. I have time for reading and writing . . . .

" What a blessing to have the War ended! But up Archangel way those horrid Bolshevici are giving trouble. . . . . What a tremendous upheaval it has been; and how difficult to get the world quiet again! "

"At present I am in a new part of the Island, called Tivoli—that word of charm! All alone—five miles from a town—difficult to get provisions. I came home the other day, from hard work, and asked my housekeeper 'What have you for my meal?' 'Two eggs, Father.' Another day: 'What have you to-day?' 'One egg, Father.' However, I see the need of having a cupboard, and send in to town for [provisions]. The cook makes good bread; the folk bring me a lot of eggs, and I manage to fare fairly well; water the only drink, and that not *very* good."

1920.

" I am writing this on a very small island (Petit Martinique) in the ocean, between Grenada and St. Vincent.

It is about four miles long. Myself and the natives all together, about 400 of them. They are all Catholics to a man, and have no resident Priest, so I am lent to them for about a month; and a Priest from a larger Island comes at times to see them. There is a small Chapel and presbytery and school. Presbytery of wood, and two little rooms. No magistrate, no policeman, no doctor (except a visiting one at times); no horse, no trap; the primitive life, seeing to land and cattle; two small shops, where bread, etc., may be had. They bring me milk, eggs and bread; and a Father from a larger Island sends me butter, fruit, and bread, so I get on well. No meat, except chicken soup sometimes; at other times bean soup. I give them Rosary, sermon, and Benediction every evening in the Chapel and go and evangelise them in their homes; and they come and see me in church and house. . . . . I am still ready for climbing a mountain or crossing a torrent. . . . . One has to get here in small sailing boats; and the sea has been very rough lately. Although the boat tossed and pitched to the great waves I was well, as being a good sailor.

"Opposite this, about four miles away, is another Island, called Union—like this[4]—reminding one of Corfu! I sailed to this Island a few days ago. Very rough sea—beautiful Island. In the far distance other isles are seen—St. Vincent far away, and smaller ones, like this . . . . 'Grenadines' as they are called."

"I am beginning life here all over again, being all alone at Gouyave. Sunday work the other day was: Saying first Mass at 8; singing second Mass at 9.30 with sermon; then sick call four miles away, giving Last Rites; then second sick call. Then quickly home for a wedding. After that I don't know how many baptisms; an irregular meal; then long Corpus Christi

[4] This letter is beautifully illustrated.

procession into the town with four altars. And after all—I felt none the worse!"

"At Gouyave . . . . we have about 5,000 souls or more, and I *used* to say that 1,000 souls were enough for one Priest!"

1921.

"I am at a small town [Victoria] now [October], and have been on and off since May. I am alone, and have no horse nor trap. So with distant sick calls I have been using a donkey. A call came five miles away the other day, and the donkey walked and stopped, and ate grass, and had to be pulled on—by my boy. I had only four bananas with me, two for him and two for me; but a good woman gave me a turkey's egg, and I swallowed it raw, and it did me good. What splendid doings in England, first at Cambridge, then at Oxford, by the opening of our new house there! But as I am out of all these grand things I fall as usual on principles. . . . . If I think of Oxford, or Lichfield Cathedral, or Ely, I say '*Ecce materia, sed ubi forma?*' . . . . I expect to be back in St. George's when you get this."[5]

[5] Oxford was Father Reginald's first love. He refers to it in his letters up to the end. In connection with Oxford the following letter from one of his cousins may be quoted:

"My chief recollection of Father Reginald was when I was visiting his sisters at Oxford at the time [1909] the Pageant was taking place. He, in a Dominican habit, and a Franciscan Father in his brown habit, girdle, and sandals, arrived at the house with a crowd of small street boys gaping at their appearance, and evidently thinking they formed some part of the Pageant!

"Father Reginald was a constant visitor at the house during my stay, and I was completely charmed and captivated by his kindliness and old-world courtesy. He would sit at the piano improvising most delightfully, with head thrown back, resembling in a remarkable degree some of the portraits of the musician Liszt. At other times I often observed him walking in the streets of Oxford, calmly reading his Book of Hours, or some religious work, entirely oblivious of the traffic or passers-by, except for an occasional look cast upon them of tender blessing."

"I am back again at St. David's. . . . . I live chiefly on bread and milk now, and the doctor says if I keep to such simple diet he gives me thirty more years!"

1922.

"Your letter . . . . and the two Pyx bags, with the sick-stole, all very welcome. I inaugurated the stole to-day, on a sick-call far into the beautiful country, over a splendid rushing torrent, and solemn mountains not very far ahead. Even with Our Lord in His Sacramental Presence, all so hidden in the Pyx, I do not mind looking at the beauties of Nature. . . . . I had to go the other day to a hospital in the country, where a Priest had not been for some time; and when I was there I found thirteen sick calls waiting for me. To four of them I gave all the Last Rites; and the nine others were typhoid fever, which I attended to one by one, turning their souls to God by instruction in necessary truths. . . . . For the rest I watch the cases, in view to the Sacraments, dealing cautiously, lest one may send up the temperature by needless talk.

"I am now staying about a mile from this hospital. . . . . I have hard Sunday work at a small chapel of ease."

1923.

"I happen to be on another Island, about thirty miles north of Grenada. . . . . I have come indeed to help the Archbishop and Parish Priest during Confirmation, First Communions, etc., for although I am well in my 84th year I have still *aliquid adolescentis* about me; and can sing Mass, preach, and get up and down hills for sick calls. A lot of small Islands are about here, and one of our Fathers, Father B——, is the Apostle of them. He lives here, on the Island Carriacou. . . . . As he is evangelising the folk on two or three Islands now I am at his house on Carriacou, all alone —and needless to say—never dull! . . . .

"The 'Little Teresa' [of Lisieux] . . . . seems to be working plain miracles for Father B——. He had a bad fall about a week ago, and suffered much pain. He applied medals of the 'Little Flower' to his pain, and was at once healed and able for work. Again, at Mass, he found a number of communicants at the rail, and only two or three Hosts in the Ciborium. He was so troubled, but put his hand over the Ciborium, and asked the 'Little Flower' to help. *Mirabile dictu,* the Hosts multiplied to the right number—just right. Again, he gives her medals away, and they multiply again; no one bringing them. . . . . Of Father D——, S.J., I have not read; but I like all present-day Saints."

1924.

"I am still well, with plenty of work in hand. Just starting for evangelising some of the dense folk in country parts; having returned from Trinidad, giving retreat to our Fathers O.P. there, and evangelising the Sisters O.S.D."

1925.

"We must take large views of our passage hence to the world of spirits. When we have 'shuffled off this mortal coil' we shall be much more like to the Angels, and to God Himself; and our own powers, the pure powers of the spirit, freed from the density of the flesh, will be quite wondrous. . . . . Therefore, 'forgetting the things behind, and stretching forth to those before, I press towards the mark.'"

(To a Nun, O.S.B. *"In Fest: S. Gertrudis Magnæ."*)

"All hail, from the midst of my Benedictine Brethren [in Trinidad] . . . . The Old Father is giving them their retreat, that's how it is. . . . . I stay here for the week, and then return to my Brethren of the White Habit in Port of Spain, where I am always quite at home. Then before long I am in Grenada again. I am just now producing an *opusculum* with the title: *Natural and Revealed Religion.* . . . . It is being

printed in Port of Spain, so I hope to take it home with me.

"The situation here is superb, on the 'Northern Range,' whose culminating point is over 3,000 feet. The Priory is nearly 800 feet up. . . . . From my window I look right down the precipice to the rushing torrent; then from this rises the gigantic form [of the mountain] opposite . . . . clad to the top with verdure. On the other side, hundreds of feet below, stretch out the vast plains of the Island; distant hills and waters; and the precipice again, with tropical trees and flowers. Far away are seen islands in the sea, and the coast of South America, which comes very close to Trinidad. . . . . Do you know that when the last day of January (1926) comes I shall have worn the white habit for seventy years; and they tell me I don't get older!"

1926.

"The Fathers O.S.B. gave me a copy of St. Benedict's Life by Abbot Snow. I've been reading it with deepest pleasure; and love his magnificent soul."

"How delighted I am to have the 'Little Flower' canonised! I so often address myself to her, and read her writings. . . . . I pray most specially to Our Lord to 'strike' [a French anti-clerical] and his associates; the Bolshevists, and other enemies of the Church; and I ask the 'Little Flower' to see to all this too."

"I have just finished an article on '*The Church and the World,*' with special reference to the persecutions in Mexico and Moscow. I daily ask Our Lord to 'strike' the ringleaders there; for He alone can manage these things. But the Angels are his executors; and have tremendous powers in their hands; so I hope you go daily to St. Michael and all the splendid Spirits, that they too may punish these evil men, and stay their dreadful machinations."

His correspondence was continued until about three weeks before his death.

Chapter X

"FIDELIS USQUE AD MORTEM"

"Those of us who knew Father Reginald familiarly felt [his artistic] instincts resulting in the three great loves of his life: Love of mountains . . . . of principles . . . . of souls. It was the same architectural instinct for the strong outlines of thought that made principles his main intellectual thirst. As he used to say with quiet emphasis: 'There is liberty of detail, but no liberty of principle.'

"As for his love of souls, its story never will, never could be told. Only one phase of it may give readers some insight into the quality of heroism that has conquered, or will conquer, the world for Christ. Englishmen and Irishmen who are proud of St. Theodore or St. Patrick remember with gratitude that these apostles began their apostolate in their ancient years. But Father Reginald Buckler gave up his birthland, every hill and dale of which he loved, and went south to a new people in his seventy-first year. Nor did he go to die, or even to slack. His apostolate amongst the grateful people was a constant but unconscious challenge to his younger brethren in the priesthood. Almost to the day of his death his work was enough for a younger life. But the work had to end, and the furrow to be closed at last. On March 18th, in his eighty-eighth year, he gave his untiring soul to God; and was buried next day amidst the sorrow of a

people who were proud to sorrow for a saintly Ambassador."[1]

" Untiring " is *le mot juste*. Father Reginald would never admit weariness; even when obviously weary. " Just pleasantly tired " was as far as he ever would go. And so, just pleasantly tired, " God's finger touched him and he slept," on the Eve of the Feast of St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church which he had served with every power of his being for seventy-two years.

It was doubtless his saintliness which preserved for him to the end the heart of a child and a fresh and eager interest in all that concerned the Church and the world, of which in Grenada he constantly wrote. He never, indeed, really lost touch with the world outside his Island. Though his opportunities for studying them were small, he interested himself in international politics—as his letters quoted and unquoted prove. Especially did he study and pray over the affairs of France and Italy; reading with the utmost attention all that came to his hand regarding the relations between France and the Holy See; identifying and praying for her politicians; interceding and asking for prayers for her conversion. His love for France is noticeable throughout his whole correspondence; and is not less remarkable towards the end, when his new and great devotion to the " Little St. Teresa " led him to speak and write continually about her country. Nor were his interests confined to things of the Church, though in the end they were all referred back to her.

[1] Fr. Vincent McNabb, O.P., in the *Tablet* of April 23rd, 1927.

Writing to his sister less than a year before his death, to thank her for pictures of Tibet, he says :—

"I am always interested in the doings of those who manage to get into Tibet. The scenery there is superb. . . . . They have their monasteries there also . . . . probably not much discipline or spirit, as we understand the words."

Many of those who knew Father Reginald only superficially have probably thought of him as a constitutionally timid man; performing quietly his religious duties and his work for souls; a mystical writer; a dreamer; never so happy as with pen or pencil in his hand. This is partly true; but it is less than half the truth. The act of supernatural courage which culminated in his apostolate in Grenada shatters for ever the notion of his timidity—to take only one great example. Nor was he destitute of physical courage, as is proved by a little story which he sometimes related in order to lay down the *rationale* of dealing with savage dogs!

About thirty years before he left England he was called on to visit for the first time a large country house on urgent business. Walking up the long drive he saw the door guarded by a couple of enormous black dogs, who rose and growled inhospitably. "I did not like it at all," he said; "but I knew the only thing to do was to look as if the place belonged to me, so I just walked quietly on, right up to them as they stood on the steps, and knocked at the door. I wondered if they would jump on me, as they never stopped growling; and either could easily have pulled me down. The people were out, and they were on

guard. So now you see you must never *seem* to be afraid of strange dogs."

Perhaps his love for animals helped him here. Most four-footed creatures were his friends, particularly cats and dogs, which, like Monsignor Benson, he would stop to stroke or pat when he met. The little black cat who used to accompany him back to the Priory at Woodchester after he had said the first Mass at the convent is historic for some of his friends; and it was a delightful sight to watch them walk along the road together; the cat leaping high to reach Father Reginald's hand, or rubbing hard against his habit; the Old Father smiling down upon it and caressing it tenderly.

But where a dozen lovable traits call for notice, and space forbids their mention, they can only be passed over in silence.

In 1926 there had again been talk of Father Reginald's returning home. His last words to one of the Fathers who went back in November were: "Goodbye, Father, and I shall hope to meet you at Oxford in September."[2] But as 1926 drew to its close and the New Year opened it became clear that his next journey would be to God. He, the untiring walker, found that his feet failed him; and yet it was only after long persuasion that he was induced to take the rest that was now imperative. He went into the Hospital at St. George's, where he had worked for so many years, and thence wrote, on his Feast-Day,[3] the last he was to

[2] He took the deepest interest in the coming opening of the new Dominican House at Oxford.

[3] Blessed Reginald of Orleans, February 12th, in the Dominican Calendar.

spend in exile, what is probably the last, or almost the last of his letters, to Father Raymund Pius Devas, O.P.

"How very kind of you to send the beautiful Bible[4] to the Old Father. How much I shall prize it! I've been wanting it so long. I did not know you were aware of it. It will last me my life. I've been reading it again and again, in bed.

"I came to hospital for bad feet—they were swollen, and one of them much inflamed. Besides this, the infirmities of age are on me now . . . . The Vicar has relieved me from Hospital work . . . .

"My feet are getting well and I return in a few days. I can never expect to be normal.[5] All which becomes a rare exercise of patience, day and night."

He never told, or spoke of, his own personal wants; though as we have seen, he did not scruple to beg for the Altar. Yet how many are there not of his children who would have loved to give him that Bible he had wanted "so long"—had they but known. . . . . Perhaps the fact was that Father Reginald had come to be regarded as a being so supernaturalised that he hardly had personal wants at all?

Five weeks after writing that letter he had passed beyond the veil. Fortified with all the Rites of the Church; conscious to the end; spared, as he had written of his brother, Father Edmund, "the imbecilities of old age," he heard at last the words for which he had waited all his long life: *"Serve bone et fidelis, intra in gaudium Domini tui."* Perhaps—may we not

[4] "The Bible was in as large type as I could find," writes Fr. Devas. "His own was all falling to pieces."

[5] As regards another painful complaint which had come upon him.

believe?—those other words once addressed to that Saint whose doctrine he had spent so much of his life in propagating: "*Bene scripsisti de Me. . . . .*"

"In those last years," writes Father Devas, "when he was living, to use his own phrase, in semi-retirement at St. George's (albeit being in sole charge of the Colony Hospital), he was always genial, always pleased to welcome the Brethren, at any gathering or quarterly meeting. Nevertheless, on such occasions he would slip away all unobserved at his accustomed hour; when he would be found, Rosary in hand, or perhaps dozing in the heat; but never so drowsy as not to hear the clock strike the hour when he could start Matins for the following day. Father Reginald carried the regularity of the cloister into his missionary life; and as a deeply religious man he realised that even life on the Mission should be well ordered. He used to devote the hours between 3 and 6 to his Hospital work in St. George's; and fearing no doubt that he would be too tired after the fatigue and heat of the day to recite his Office in the evening, he saw nothing for it but to recite the morrow's Matins at the rather unliturgical hour of 2 p.m. And how grateful he was if he could find a companion, when in some relatively cool corner the Office could be recited *chorus contra chorum*. He used to say what a help this was to him; taking as it did but half-an-hour or so. And no wonder; for sometimes towards the end of his life he would get *lost* in the Office, when he may have been nearly an hour finishing his Matins.

"His devotion at Holy Mass was beautiful to behold; and his whole appearance venerable indeed, robed as he always was, in the white habit of his Order of which he was so justly proud, and which lost little of its effect by his wearing the white shoes and Panama hat of the tropics.

"The reader may feel inclined to ask what the people in the West Indies thought of Father Reginald? He was certainly loved; yet I think I may say that, much as he was loved, he was revered more. Genial as he showed himself to be with his brethren and intimate acquaintances, he was always rather reserved with the world at large. On his way to and from the hospital at St. George's he seldom noticed anyone, being obviously recollected and mindful of God. No ready word of greeting sprang to his lips, such as becomes a habit with most people living in that smiling sunshine. Even the little children of the poor, irresistible to others, who in the morning will run up and say 'Good evening, Fader,' and in the evening, 'Good morning, Fader,' drew forth no reply from this white-haired old priest. Not that he disliked children—still less that he despised anyone. Far from it; and we were all witnesses of the extreme pains he took over the instruction of the dullest and most ignorant, in hearing their confessions at any hour, and in teaching them the Little Acts.

"And not only educated Catholics, but all, from the Governor downwards, realised this, and the result was that all had the highest regard for him as a man of simple, upright faith and piety. When the Prince of Wales visited Grenada in 1920 they say it was a touching sight to see the youthful Heir to the Throne raising this venerable Religious from his bended knee, and having a friendly talk with him.

"From the idiosyncrasies of old age Father Reginald of course was not entirely exempt; but they were such as to cause little inconvenience. One detail I remember. Fresh cases were constantly coming into the hospital, and Father Reginald would be apprised of their arrival; but never could he be persuaded to take the Blessed Sacrament with him unless he was *absolutely certain* that he would have to give Holy Communion. The result of course was that, time and again, he would give himself just double the amount

of fatigue necessary. Not infrequently, indeed, he would have to send an S.O.S. by telephone, and another Father, if happily at home, or otherwise on his return home, would have to hurry down to the Old Father bearing the Blessed Sacrament. But as those of us who had the privilege of living with him used to say, if that was all the trouble he gave in his eighties, it was no trouble at all; and we were all agreed that he was indeed a most lovable and 'livable with' old Religious."

"Whenever a Parish Priest broke down in health," says a writer in the *Grenada Guardian* of March 22nd, 1927, "Father Reginald could always be relied on to carry on; and wherever he went his cheery optimism and healthy vigour proved a veritable tonic to many a despondent soul. . . . . Among the many prayers that will ascend to the Throne of Grace on his behalf not the least will be those of the [hospital] patients who have had cause to be grateful to his memory in the past."

Among the cloud of testimonies to Father Reginald's wonderful life as Priest and Religious, the two following, written by foreign priests who had, in one case at least, exceptional opportunities of knowing him, are perhaps the most remarkable.

The Rev. Father Costédoat, S.C.J., of Bétharram, near Lourdes, who experienced, and has never forgotten Father Reginald's courtesy and kindness to the Religious exiles from France during and after the great *diaspora* of 1903-4, writes as follows:—

"You have been good enough to ask me to write some of my memories of the holy and excellent Father Reginald. Most gladly do I respond to your request; and gladly also bear witness to the charity and goodness of this remarkable son of St. Dominic.

"Sent to England by my Superiors at the beginning of November, 1903, I received the most sympathetic and cordial welcome at the Woodchester convent, to which I had been recommended by Father Peter-Baptist, O.F.M.[6]

"All the same, I could not help feeling very lonely. It was the first time I had been separated from my Community, and I felt somehow like a child who has just left his family to go to school.

"Father Reginald understood my situation and realised my most intimate feelings. Of his own accord he came to call on me in the convent parlour: he spoke to me with a delicacy and tenderness which touched me profoundly. Never shall I forget that sweet smile of his; nor his glance, at the same time penetrating and attractive. His face, his actions, even his simplest movements—everything in him spoke, in a word, of sanctity.

"During the two or three months of my stay at the convent he came at least twice a week to take me for long walks in the country round Woodchester, which I remember as very beautiful; and which in his company appeared enchanting. His conversation, always pious and supernatural, as well as interesting and encouraging, contributed more than anything else to make me love even more than I did both England and the English, of both of which I retain the sweetest and dearest memories.

"During the eight years I spent in that country I had the chance of seeing the good Father again from time to time; and each time it was for me a joy as great as that of our first meeting. When I left England in 1911 I paid him a farewell visit at Woodchester. He gave me one of his works, which I still preserve as

[6] Père Costédoat was the first of several Fathers of his Congregation to receive hospitality at the Franciscan convent, Woodchester. They were domiciled in the Guest-House, and said Mass in the Chapel.

a precious thing. It contained instructions given by him to his novices.[7]

"Since then I had heard that he had gone to Grenada; but I never had any direct news of him. I considered the occasion you gave me of writing to him [in January, 1927] as a direct favour from Heaven. I found once more, in his answer, all his charity and his holiness—and more—the sweet serenity which seems the finest fruit of old age.

"I pray that he will remember me before God."[8]

Father Thomas Schwertner, O.P., of the Province of New York; Rector of the Holy Name church, Philadelphia; editor of the American *Rosary Magazine*, says:—

"I was a young student, fresh from Rome, where I had been bewitched by the personality and sanctity of the Dominican Master-General, Father Cormier, when in the summer of 1910 I had the good fortune to spend a week at Woodchester; seeing much of Father Reginald Buckler; speaking frequently and familiarly with him, and walking often through the beautiful country.

"What struck me most at first sight of him was a close likeness to Father Cormier, not so much physical as spiritual. Both men were about the same age, the same height, and had the same sort of shuffling walk. The latter was especially remarkable. There was also a marked similarity in the way they both 'exploded' certain words which they wished to emphasize in their conversation, which was generally carried on in a low, gentle monotone. But the spiritual likeness between the two was highly striking. There was that gentle-

[7] When Père Costédoat became Novice-master himself, shortly after his return to France, he says he found this work invaluable for his instructions. The Bétharram Fathers, of whom he was the pioneer in England, are now in charge of the mission at Droitwich.

[8] Translated from the original French.

ness which shone from eye, and speech, and gesture, and general bearing. No one could mistake this for softness; for there was conveyed the impression of immense reserve strength and power when these would be necessary to carry through some pre-determined plan.

"Father Reginald was the soul of courtesy which had a certain tinge of chivalry about it. Scarcely had I reached the Priory when he began to busy himself in making me comfortable. It was almost painful to me to see this veteran servant of the Lord inconvenience himself in countless small ways to make my stay pleasant. In all he did there shone forth good nature and a good heart. One never felt that he was taking mental account of the inconveniences to which he put himself to prove that virtue of hospitality which the early Fathers and writers of the Church extolled so highly. He apparently got as much fun out of it as I gathered pleasure. One needed not to watch him long, however, to know that it was all done for supernatural reasons. Spirituality seemed to shine even through his smiles. One gathered the conviction that here was not only a true gentleman, but also a genuine saint. His mind ran naturally on spiritual things.

"As a simple novice in the States I had heard read aloud to us his spiritual classic: *The Perfection of Man by Charity*. I can never forget that book; because it was the first time I had heard the teaching of St. Thomas put in readable English for all, even the uniniated, to understand.

"Father Reginald showed himself a man who had tried out in his own life what he had succeeded in putting so clearly in writing. In our walks and talks he spoke of spiritual things, not as one who believes, but rather as one who sees. The veil that shut off the supernatural from him was transparent. He fairly seemed to touch and handle the realities of the other world. He spoke of Our Saviour as one might speak

of a friend well-known and tried. The most commonplace things we came across in our walk would suggest to him the passage of the Master along the same lanes and byeways. He loved the beauties of nature, as I learned on our several walks, when he would stop and give me all kinds of recondite information about the flowers and plants we met with, or which grew in the convent-garth. Like Huysmans, he knew the symbolism of flowers, and the spiritual significance which students of the Liturgy had attached to them. His whole conversation bristled with this vivid realisation of the spiritual. He saw footprints of the Christ, and His Mother, and especially the Saints of His Order in the sand and dust where I planted my feet without ever realising that I was treading on ground that was holy in his eyes.

"Men with such living Faith are seldom to be met with. One can never forget such a seer of hidden things and unobserved beauties in this world of ours. This, no doubt, gave to his sermons, several of which I was privileged to hear, that personal note, that immediate appeal, that irresistible unction, that surety of outlook which, to my way of thinking, distinguished him from all the preachers of his day. One soon forgot the directness and crystal clarity of his diction, the ready flow of his thoughts, the keen understanding of the human heart, with its play and interplay of motives and passions. Like Moses coming down from the mountain with face aglow, Father Reginald's countenance fairly beamed when he made known the secrets of the Great King.

"Sometimes he would shut his eyes during a sermon; and then his spirit soared upward, carrying with it those who were fortunate enough to have gathered round his pulpit. There was not very much animation of voice or gesture in the pulpit; but that steady looking into the Face of God which all could feel and realize. Something of the same transfiguration took place in

him when he presided at the organ. I do not know whether he ever improvised; but I feel sure he might have done so with the best effect. His sermons, which seemed to flow from him spontaneously, led one to believe that he might have carried on improvisation at the organ with marked success.

"Father Reginald, living as he did in the presence of God, must have had a very tender conscience, for shortly after I arrived at Woodchester, he begged to go to confession [to me]. Sometimes he would come as often as three or four times a day for the same purpose. In his spiritual dealings with others there was nothing of the scrupulous or hyper-refined. He was the essence of good sense in his spiritual dealings with others. He made great demands of those who were willing to follow his direction. He allowed no one to dodge the little crosses and crucifixions of everyday life. He insisted on the most rigorous kind of fair-dealing with God, so to put it. But there was nothing cramped or narrow in his spirit. He liked a quiet joke. His laugh was never loud, but gentle, kind, and sweet as his personality. He saw the inconsistencies of men, and in a kind of boyish way pointed them out. In his innocuous critical spirit he most revealed himself the boy he ever was at heart. He enjoyed seeing others in good humour, and he knew a surprising lot about sports.

"I think one reason why Father Reginald took a particular interest in me was because he was deeply interested in the future of the Church in America.[9] He spoke about this frequently to me, and unfolded the apostolic ideals he had probably dreamt before the Tabernacle, where, undoubtedly, he more than once offered himself as a victim for souls. He deplored the

[9] This, though unknown to Father Thomas Schwertner, is abundantly proved by Father Reginald's letters over a period of many years; long before he met the young American Dominican.

dearth of good Catholic literature in English. This, no doubt, led him to use his pen up to the very end.

"After all these years the impressions I retain of Father Reginald are above all that he was a true gentleman who was in dead earnest about leading the life 'hid with Christ in God,' which did not prevent him from making himself 'all things to all men.' Kind, gentle, considerate in the spontaneous fashion of a boy, he was just the kind of man to stir up the enthusiasm of the young, who saw in him one whose spirit had never grown old. He passed by spreading the sweet perfume of a virtuous life, and the sunshine of a gentle personality.

"May he rest in peace."

Very perfectly had this, the last of his generation, fulfilled the old Buckler motto: "Faithful unto Death." In 1884, so long ago that it is difficult to realise that he had then worn the white habit for nearly thirty years, he asked of one who, then in his beloved France, was about to visit Lourdes:—

"Pray for me, please, at the Grotto, that I may be a true and valiant lover; that I may have fidelity to Grace; that the Old Man may yield to the New; that I may persevere to the end; that I may know and do the Divine Will through life."

Perhaps few prayers ever offered to Our Lady of Lourdes have been more perfectly answerd.

THE END.

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